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NIKOLAI V. GOGOL

DEAD SOULS

With an Introduction by
STEPHEN GRAHAM

LONDON: ERNEST BENN LTD.
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INTRODUCTION

"DEAD SOULS," written by Gogol in the years 1837-8 and published in 1842, is the greatest humorous novel in the Russian language. It is the most popular book in Russia, and its appeal is world-wide. Even those who have but the remotest idea of Russia and Russian life are frankly amused when they read it. Because of its literary form it has been likened to *Don Quixote*, *Gil Blas*, *Tom Jones*, for it is the story of the adventures of a man wandering from house to house and town to town along the ways of his country. But it has a deeper human appeal than any of these volumes. It is more broadly humorous, but it is also more tender, more serious. Though it is largely a satire there is not a line of cynicism in the book, not a sneer, not a phrase inspired by the author's vanity or by selfish indifference to the life of the outside world. It was in reality a passionate expression of Gogol's love of his country, and though it is so pleasant to read, the writing of it broke Gogol's heart. In his black grief he even burned the whole of the volume that was to have been the sequel to *Dead Souls*—what is sometimes referred to as the second part.

In one of the wonderful conversations given in Turgeniev's *Smoke*, there is an occasion when some one says that if you speak to an Englishman the conversation sooner or later comes to sport, if to a Frenchman sooner or later to woman, and that when you speak to a Russian the conversation always comes round to *Russia*—is she not a wonderful country, what a destiny her people have, will they not work out in Russia something entirely new, and so on. This is a true observation. Russia is the beloved theme of the Russians. All Russians have opinions about their own country; Russians more than people of other nationality live for their country, are ready to suffer for it, feel personal joy or pain, happiness or grief, according to its daily history. Anxiety as to what Russia will become, love of Russia, these are the master instincts of Russian writers.

So there is scarcely a novel in the Russian language that has not a national character. *Dead Souls* is no exception to the rule. Indeed, if asked which Russian novel was the most characteristically national, it would be necessary to answer—this novel of Gogol, not Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, or Turgeniev's *Virgin Soil*, or Dostoieffsky's *Brothers Karamazof*, but Gogol's *Dead Souls*.

Dead Souls is Russia herself. The characters have become national types. Tchichikof, Nozdref, Manilof, Sobakevitch, Pliushkin, Korobotchkina, are more alluded to by Russians than Mr. Pickwick, Squire Western, Falstaff, Micawber, are by us. The sayings of Gogol have become proverbs—such sentences as: "Love us when we are dirty, for every one will love us when we are clean." The ideas set forth by him have become national ideas. The passage at the end of Chapter XI is one of the most famous in Russian literature: "Oh troika, oh bird-troika, who first thought of you? Only a jolly people could have given birth to you. . . ." From this passage and what follows the troika has been taken as a symbol of the national life of Russia. Readers of the *Brothers Karamazof* remember how the idea is discussed during the great trial at the end of the book. The *troika* is a sledge or cart drawn by three galloping horses—one horse between the shafts, the others one on each side of him; the side-horses are the wings of the chariot in Gogol's figure. The *troika* is characteristic of the wild hearty type of the Russian people, their prodigality, recklessness and generosity.

Dead Souls is at first hearing a somewhat terrifying title for a book, but when it is explained it is robbed of all terror. All depends on the fact that in the days of serfdom the serfs were referred to as souls, and you reckoned the importance of a man's estate by the number of "souls" on it. Thus you said of a man, "He has a big estate of several thousand souls," or of another, "Oh, he is in a poor way, he has only a few souls; they are terribly ill-fed, and mortgaged even then." Dead souls are dead serfs. Tchichikof, the hero of the novel, hit on an ingenious plan for making money. He went about from landowner to landowner, inquiring how many souls had died since the last census, and persuading the Russian squires to make them over to him on paper. Serfs who were dead were no use to the squire, even though in a technical sense they did still exist and could be legally transferred. Tchichikof drew up deeds of sale and purchased several thousand dead souls, hoping to be able to raise money on the security of these souls. His dream was to have an estate of his own with a fine complect of live serfs. By telling the stories of his adventures Gogol unveils a picture of Russia.

Gogol's ancestors were themselves small landowners and possessors of serfs. He came from the South and his types are nearly all Little Russian, as those of Dostoieffsky and Turgeniev are for the most part Northern and Great Russian. In Gogol we find relief from Dostoieffsky: just as in the gentle South of Russia you find sanctuary from the heavy and frozen North. Gogol gives pictures of the marvellous Southern Spring, of the bright flowers, the songs of the birds, the tinkling of troika bells, the lure of the road, and the delirious youth of the Earth when the snows have just melted. His heart beats quicker than that

of a Northerner; his colours are warmer. He is quick to be glad. He is, however, quick to be melancholy also. He is quick to be generous; he is also quick to understand the subtleties of bargaining. This is reflected in his writings and in his life.

Gogol was born in 1809 in Cossack country. He put all the legends of the countryside into his writings. For besides being a realist he was a romanticist. He wrote the greatest Russian historical novel, a story of the Cossack warrior—*Tarass Bulba*, a wonderful presentation of the old life of the Cossacks. He rescued a picture of manners from oblivion. It is a fine book, and can be compared advantageously with the best work of Merimée or Sir Walter Scott. *Tarass Bulba* did for Gogol what *Waverley* did for Scott in Great Britain. It gave him an immense popularity, both at court and among the rank and file of reading people. On the strength of its success he was given a professor's chair in Russian history, and he lectured at the Imperial University at St. Petersburg. His position in Russian literature has always been remarkable. For besides writing the greatest humorous novel and the greatest historical novel in the Russian language, he wrote also one of the greatest and most amusing of her dramas, *The Revizor*, or, as it is sometimes called in English, *The Inspector-General*. *The Revizor* is played with great success by the Theatre of Art at Moscow, and indeed could be played with success in London, but for the fact that British actors and actresses have very great difficulty in reproducing the Russian national characteristics.

Gogol's other contributions to the literature of his country are less remarkable. He wrote many short stories, one of which is a sort of master type—*Akaky Akakievitch's New Cloak*. This probably gave Dostoieffsky the idea for his first novel *Poor Folk*, and it is much alluded to generally in Russian literature. It also has become national. That is one of the characteristics of Russia—the giving to stories and to people a national significance. Gogol also wrote a great number of stories and sketches founded on Little Russian folk-lore. He illustrates a great number of curious beliefs about devils and witches, and incidentally gives a rather wonderful picture of the country of his time.

It is said he was a very backward scholar. He seemed dull at school, and his genius did not appear. He finished the school course, taking the school-leaving examination equivalent to our Matriculation, and there his scholastic career ended. This was when he was eighteen. It is said that he often felt the lack of a good educational background afterwards. Life did not promise him much at eighteen. He was sent next year to St. Petersburg and took a small clerical post in a Government office. The pay was twenty roubles—two pounds—a month, and he had very little else to depend on except, as it turned out—writing stories. But he found material for *Akaky Akakievitch* and several other tales, saw Tchichikof himself no doubt, and he wrote a great

deal. His first story came out when he was twenty years old, published in an obscure magazine under a pseudonym. He had success at once, and during the next two years had several tales and sketches printed. He started writing out his folk-lore stories. When he was twenty-five he wrote *Tarass Bulba*, the novel that brought him such great success, and the same year the one-time backward scholar was made professor of history. He wrote *The Revizor* the same year. At twenty-six he began *Dead Souls*. When he was twenty-seven, that is in 1836, *The Revizor* was licensed by the Censor and produced in St. Petersburg. The Tsar himself was present, and led the applause of what was at the time a great fashionable success, though it was, as a matter of fact, a satire on the official life of a provincial town. The fame of Gogol grew to rival that of Pushkin; money flowed in to him like water. He became a rich man and could winter at Rome and Baden-Baden. Thus in a few short years he ran through all the stages of life between that of a poor underpaid official and being a second Walter Scott. He would probably have done well to have kept the anonymity that Scott kept. He would have done more things for Russia. As it is, looking at his history, one cannot but feel that success was too much for him. He wrote practically the whole of this volume of *Dead Souls* in the year of his greatest fame, that is 1837, when he was twenty-eight, and he never wrote anything more that came to anything. Five relatively barren years passed and he published *Dead Souls* in 1842. For three years he laboured at a sequel to this book, but burned his work at the end of it. By 1848 he had become plunged in melancholy, and we find him on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He scribbled away at *Dead Souls*, but had lost his magic touch, lost his faith in himself. In 1851, on the 11th of February, after returning from vespers he burned all the remaining papers of the sequel to *Dead Souls*. When he had done that he felt he had lost everything and that his time to die was at hand. He fell into an apathetic stupor, would see no one and had no interest in anything. Ten days after the burning of the manuscript he died.

But his work did not die. His books went through countless editions and were published in beautiful volumes with clever illustrations, or in cheap volumes with scarcely legible print. He was the national literary hero of his age. When Dostoieffsky appeared, the best that could be said of him was that a new Gogol had been discovered. Dostoieffsky himself was at first strongly under the influence of Gogol, and it is interesting to compare *Poor Folk* and the earlier humorous tales of Dostoieffsky with the humorous work of Gogol. Dostoieffsky, however, was destined to emerge from the influence of Gogol and take the great Russian people a long way farther on the road of national self-realisation.

It was in 1909 that Gogol had his last glorious year—the centenary of his birth. After the gloom and despair of the

revolutionary period the Russian nation turned with relief to Gogol and found consolation there. The apathy and pessimism of Gogol's later years they ascribed to despair over Russia, and in that they found a common ground for comfort. The horrors of the years 1905–1909 had blighted the lives of many young men in Russia. Gogol's tears were their tears also. I was in Moscow myself that year, and read more about Gogol than ever before or since. I saw the somewhat famous monument unveiled in the Arbat Square at Moscow. It is worth seeing, and visitors to Moscow should go and see the immortal types of *Dead Souls* in bas-relief round the granite block on which the tragical and unhappy-looking Gogol is sitting.

I read *Dead Souls* long before I even thought of going to Russia. I have always wanted to give it to English friends to read. The existing translation was out of print. I think it might successfully have been re-issued before the war, but of course the present interest in Russia makes it certain of the widest reading. It was a matter of considerable joy to me when Mr. Fisher Unwin consented to re-publish it. At this time, when knowledge of the Russian life and character is so necessary for the British people, it is important that the great Russian classics be accessible. Ideas of Russia gleaned from books on Russia written by English people should be checked either by personal observation in Russia or by the reading of the great Russian novels. The works of Dostoieffsky and Tolstoy and Turgeniev have done much for Anglo-Russian friendship and mutual understanding. Gogol, who has been strangely neglected, can take his share. His books, and especially *Dead Souls*, are full of delight for every one.

STEPHEN GRAHAM.

LONDON,

2nd February, 1915.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CAPITAL OF THE GOVERNMENT

A SMALL and quite a pretty britchka on springs entered the gates of the hostelry in the provincial city of N. N.; it was of the sort used by retired colonels, staff-captains, landed gentry who own some two hundred souls of peasants, and, in a word, by all who are called gentlemen of the middle class. In the britchka sat a gentleman who was neither handsome nor yet very plain in his personal appearance, neither too stout nor too thin; it was impossible to say that he was old, nor could he be called very young. His arrival produced no commotion whatever in the town, and was not signalised by anything in particular; though two moujiks who were standing at the door of a pot-house opposite the inn, made some remarks, which had, however, more reference to the equipage than to the person seated in it. "Just look," said one of them to the other, "what a wheel that is! What do you think? Will that wheel last as far as Moscow, or not?"—"Oh! it will hold out," replied the other. "But it won't hold out as far as Kazan, I fancy?"—"It will not," returned the other. And here the conversation ended. However, as the britchka drove into the inn-yard, it was met by a young man in white duck trousers very narrow and very short, and a swallow-tailed coat with claims to fashion, beneath which was visible a shirt-front fastened with a Tula pin, in the shape of a bronze pistol. The young man turned round, surveyed the equipage, caught hold of his cap, which the wind was on the point of blowing off, and then went his way.

When the carriage had entered the courtyard, the gentleman was received by one of the servants of the inn—a *polovoi* as they are called in Russian hostelries—who was so lively and restless that it was even impossible to see what sort of a face he had. He ran out briskly, napkin in hand, his lanky figure clad in a long cotton surtout, with its waist almost at the nape of his neck, tossed back his hair, and quickly led the gentleman upstairs along the whole length of a wooden gallery, to show him the chamber sent him by God. The chamber was of the well-known sort, for the inn was also of the familiar species—that is to say, exactly like all taverns in provincial towns, where for two roubles a day, travellers obtain a sleeping-room full of beetles

which peep out of every corner like plums, and having a door leading into an adjoining apartment, which door is always blocked up with a chest of drawers. In that room too a neighbour is always lodged, some silent and quiet, but very curious, man, who takes an interest in finding out every particular relating to the stranger. The frontage of the hostelry corresponded with its interior: it was very long, and two storeys high; the lower one was not stuccoed, but preserved the hue of its dark-red bricks, which were already of a muddy tint by nature, and had grown still darker through the severe weather of many years; the upper storey was painted the inevitable yellow. On the lower floor there were shops with horse-collars, ropes, and cracknels, etc., and in the corner shop, or rather at its window, sat a *sbiten** seller, with a samovar of red copper, and a face as red as his samovar. At a distance it might have even been supposed that two samovars were standing in the window, had not the man had a beard as black as pitch.

While the newly-arrived gentleman was inspecting his room, his luggage was brought in; first of all came a trunk of white leather, somewhat the worse for wear, and showing signs that this was not the first time it had travelled. The trunk was brought in by the coachman Selifan, an undersized man in a short *tulup*† and the footman Petrushka, a young fellow of thirty, with a rather surly face, a very thick nose and lips, and wearing a plain, somewhat worn surtout, which had evidently come from his master's shoulders. After the trunk came a dressing-case of mahogany with inlaid decorations of veined birchwood, a boot-jack, and a roast chicken wrapped up in blue paper. When all this had been brought in, the coachman Selifan betook himself to the stable to see to the horses, and the footman Petrushka began to settle himself in the small anteroom, an extremely dark little hole, whither he had already contrived to transport his cloak, and with it some of his own peculiar odour, which had been communicated to, and was wafted after, the bag containing the articles pertaining to his toilet. In this tiny den he placed against the wall a narrow, three-legged bedstead, covered it with a small semblance of a mattress as flat as a pancake, and perhaps as greasy, which he had succeeded in procuring from the landlord of the inn.

While his servants were installing themselves and getting things to rights, the gentleman had betaken himself to the general parlour. Every traveller knows what these common parlours are like: the same walls painted in oil colours, darkened above by pipe-smoke, and covered below with the marks made by the backs of travellers and tradespeople, for merchants come here on market-days in sixes and sevens to drink their customary

* *Sbiten* is a beverage made of water, honey, and laurel-leaves, or salvia, and often drunk in Russia instead of tea, especially by the poorer classes.

† A sheepskin coat.

two glasses of tea. There was the usual smoke-begrimed ceiling, the same smoky chandelier with its multitude of pendant glass drops, which leaped and jingled every time the waiter ran across the worn oil-cloth, boldly flourishing his tray, upon which stood well-nigh as many tea-cups as there are birds on the sea-shore. Moreover, there were the usual oil paintings on the walls; in a word, everything was exactly the same as what is found everywhere, the only difference being that one of the pictures represented a nymph with such an enormous bosom as the reader has, in all probability, never beheld. Such freaks of nature, however, occur in various historical pictures, whence, at what time, and by whom brought to us in Russia, is unknown, but sometimes by our grandees and art-lovers, who have purchased them in Italy on the advice of the couriers who conducted them.

The gentleman threw off his cap and unwound from his neck a rainbow-hued woollen scarf, such as a wife prepares for her husband with her own hands, giving it to him with suitable instructions how to wrap himself up. Who makes these things for bachelors no one can tell. God knows! For myself, although a celibatarian, I have never worn such a scarf. Having unwound his scarf, the gentleman ordered dinner. While they served him with the various dishes usual at an inn, such as cabbage soup with tarts, purposely kept for several weeks, calf's brains with peas, small sausages with cabbage, roast capon, pickled cucumbers, and the eternal sweet puff-paste tarts which are always ready at one's service—while he was being served with all these either warm or cold, he made the waiter tell him all sorts of nonsense about who had formerly kept the inn, and who kept it now, whether there was much profit derived from it, and whether the landlord was a great rogue, to which the waiter answered according to custom, "Oh, a very great one, sir! a perfect rascal!" For there are a great many people nowadays in civilised Russia who cannot eat a mouthful in a tavern without talking to the servant, and even sometimes jesting in an amusing way at his expense.

However, the new arrival's questions were not all foolish ones. He inquired with great minuteness who was the governor of the town, who was president of the court, who was procurator; in short, he did not omit a single individual of importance; but he interrogated him with still greater minuteness concerning all the prominent landowners: how many souls (serfs) such a one had, how far he lived from town, what his character was, even, and how often he came into the city; he inquired, too, attentively concerning the condition of that region —were there no diseases in the government, epidemic complaints, deadly fevers, small-pox, and the like; and he put other questions of the same sort, and in a manner which gave proof of something more than mere curiosity. There was something

respectable about the gentleman's manners, and he blew his nose very loudly. It is impossible to say how he managed it, but his nose resounded like a trumpet. This won him much respect from the servant, who every time he heard the noise shook back his hair, straightened himself up into a more respectful attitude, and then bending down his head from his full height, inquired, "Is there anything you would like, sir?" After dinner the gentleman sipped a small cup of coffee, and seated himself on the sofa, placing behind his back the cushion, which in Russian taverns is stuffed with something very much resembling bricks and pebbles instead of wool.

Then he began to yawn, and ordered them to show him to his room, where he lay down and slept for two hours. Having rested himself he wrote upon a scrap of paper, at the request of the servant, his title, Christian name, and surname, so that they might be communicated to the police, according to regulation. The waiter, as he descended the stairs, spelt out on the bit of paper the following words: "Collegiate Councillor Pavel Ivanovitch Tchitchikoff, landed proprietor, travelling on his own private business."

While the waiter was still engaged in deciphering this, letter by letter, Pavel Ivanovitch Tchitchikoff set out to take a look at the town, which seemed to be satisfactory, for he found that it was not a whit behind other provincial cities; the yellow paint on the stone buildings struck the eye forcibly, and the wooden structures were of a modest dark grey. The houses were one and two storeys high, or a storey and a half, including the inevitable "entresol," which is so very beautiful, in the opinion of provincial architects. In some places, these houses seemed lost in the middle of a street which was as broad as a field, with interminable wooden fences; in other places they were collected in a cluster; and here more activity on the part of the people and more life were perceptible. Signboards met the eye, with representations of cracknels and boots, nearly obliterated by the rain; and here and there was a painting of a pair of blue breeches, and the name of some Warsaw tailor. Here, moreover, was a shop full of caps—leather caps with peaks, and military ones; over there a billiard-table was depicted with two players wearing swallow-tailed coats, such as visitors to the theatres put on when they intend to go behind the scenes after the last act. The players were painted with their cues in position, with their arms somewhat drawn back, and with crooked legs which had just executed a flourish in the air. Beneath all this was written, "Here's the Establishment." Here and there tables stood in the street, bearing nuts, and soap, and gingerbread which looked like soap; in other places there were eating-houses, with pictures of a fat fish, and a fork thrust into it. Most frequently of all, one noticed darkened figures of the imperial two-headed eagle, nowadays replaced by the

laconic inscription, "Drinking-house."* The pavement was everywhere in a bad condition.

The traveller glanced at the city-garden, which was planted with sickly trees, and after catechising the sentry there as to the nearest way of reaching the cathedral, the courts, and the governor's house, in case of need, he went to survey the river, which flowed through the middle of the city. On the way he tore down a theatrical poster from the pillar to which it was attached, in order that he might read it thoroughly on his return home; stared intently at a rather pretty woman who passed along the sidewalk, followed by a little boy in military livery, with a package in his hand; and then he went home and to his room, being assisted upstairs by the servant of the inn. After drinking his tea, he seated himself at the table, ordered a light to be brought, pulled the poster out of his pocket, held it near the candle, and began to read it, half shutting his right eye as he did so. The poster contained but little of interest: a drama of Kotzebue's was to be performed at the local theatre, Mr. Poplevin playing the part of Rolla, and Miss Zyablova that of Cora. The rest of the characters were of no consequence, nevertheless he read all the names, and even got as far as the prices for the pit, and learnt that the poster was printed at the Government printing-office. He then, it appears, wound up the day with a plateful of cold veal, some sour cabbage-soup, and a sound sleep—a *regular bear sleep*, as people say in some localities of the vast Russian empire.

The whole of the following day was devoted to visits. The new-comer set out to call upon all the official hierarchy of the town. He paid his respects to the governor, who, like himself, was neither fat nor lean in person. The governor wore the order of St. Anna† dangling from his neck, and was said to be down on the list for a star; he was a very good-natured man, moreover, and sometimes embroidered on tulle. Then the traveller called upon the vice-governor, the procurator, the president of the court, the chief of police, the farmer of the brandy revenues, the director of the imperial factories—indeed, suffice it to say that he displayed unusual activity in the matter of calls.

In his conversations with the ruling personages, he contrived to flatter each in a very artful way. He hinted to the governor, as though cursorily, that to visit his government was like entering Paradise. The roads were everywhere like velvet, he said; and he added that the rulers who appointed wise officers were worthy of the greatest praise. To the chief of police he said something extremely flattering about the watchmen of the town; and in the course of conversation with the vice-governor and

* Until recent times, the crown received the revenues of the drinking-houses, or *kabaki*; hence the two-headed eagles.

† The fifth in rank of the Russian orders; was founded Feb. 14, 1735, by Charles Frederic of Schleswig-Holstein.

the president of the court, who were as yet only state councillors, he twice addressed them as "Your Excellency"* by mistake, which pleased them greatly. The result of this was that the governor asked him to honour him that same evening with his company at a family party; the other officials did the same on their part, one asking him to dinner, another to a game of Boston,† and a third to drink a cup of tea.

The stranger appeared to avoid saying much about himself; but when he did say anything, it consisted of commonplace remarks, uttered with evident discretion. He had gone through a great deal in his time, he said. He had suffered for the sake of Right; he had many enemies, who even sought his life; and now, feeling desirous of settling down in peace, he was seeking a place of residence. Having reached that town, he added, he had regarded it as his positive duty to pay his respects to the principal officials. Such was all that people learned regarding this new arrival, who did not fail to make his appearance promptly at the governor's assembly. His preparations for this party occupied him more than two hours, for he paid unwonted attention to his toilet.

After a brief after-dinner nap, he had an elaborate wash, changed his linen, and finally donned a cranberry-coloured, swallow-tailed coat. Having dressed in this fashion, he drove in his own carriage along the wide, interminable streets, illuminated by the feeble light gleaming here and there from the windows. However, the governor's house was illuminated as though for a ball: there were calashes with lanterns, two sentries at the entrance, and postilions' shouts in the distance; in short, all that was requisite. Tchitchikoff was almost forced to close his eyes on his entrance into the drawing-room, for the glare of the candles, the lamps, and the ladies' dresses was terrible. Everything was flooded with light. Black dress-coats, moreover, fluttered hither and thither, and Tchitchikoff had not succeeded in looking about him when his arm was seized by the governor, who at once presented him to his wife. The newly-arrived guest thereupon favoured the lady with a compliment—a very polite one for a middle-aged man whose official rank was neither very high nor very low. When the couples of dancers drove everyone against the walls as they came to a stand-still, he put his hands behind his back and looked at them very attentively for a couple of minutes. Many ladies were dressed fashionably and well; others were clothed with whatever God had sent to that provincial town. The men here, as everywhere else, were of two sorts. Some were slender, and hovered incessantly

* *Vashe prevoskhoditelstvo.* This title is due only to the members of the third and fourth classes of the Russian hierarchy. As members of the fifth class, the vice-governor and the judge only had a right to the title of *Vuisokopôdnui*, "well-born."

† "Boston," a card game which was very popular on the Continent during the first half of the present century.

about the ladies; a few of them—who were only with difficulty distinguishable from Petersburgians—wore tastefully arranged whiskers, or had fine-looking, smoothly shaven faces.

These seated themselves beside the ladies, talked to them in French, and threw them into confusion exactly as if they were in the capital. The other men consisted of the stout ones, or those who were like the stranger, Tchitchikoff; that is, not so very fat, and yet not thin. These latter looked askance at the ladies, and retreated from them, casting sidelong glances about them to discover whether the governor's servants had set out the green tables for whist anywhere. Their faces were full and round, some of them had beards, here and there one of them was pock-marked. These were the prominent officials of the town.

Alas! fat men know better how to manage their affairs in this world than thin ones do. The thin ones only serve on special commissions, or are merely in the ranks, and change about here and there; their existence is too light in some way, too airy, and not to be depended upon. But the stout ones never fill minor positions, they always hold responsible ones; and if they do settle down anywhere, they do so forcibly and reliably, so that the place itself trembles and threatens to give way beneath them. They are not fond of external glitter; their coats are not so skilfully cut as the thin men's coats; but, on the other hand, they have plenty of cash in their coffers.

Tchitchikoff thought of all this as he surveyed the company, and the result was that he finally joined the stout men, among whom he found nearly all his acquaintances. The procurator, who had very black, thick brows, and a left eye which was rather given to winking, as much as to say, "Come into the other room, my boy, and I'll tell you something!" He was a serious and reticent man, however. Then there was the postmaster, a man of low stature, but a wit and a philosopher; and the president of the court, a very sensible and amiable man. All these greeted Tchitchikoff as an old friend, whereupon he bowed, somewhat on one side, but not without courtesy. He next made the acquaintance of a very polite and friendly landowner, Maniloff, and of a rather awkward one, Sobakevitch, who trod on his foot the very first thing, and said, "I beg your pardon!"

They all immediately asked him to join them at whist, and he agreed to do so with a very good grace. They seated themselves at a small table and did not rise until supper-time. All conversation entirely ceased, as is proper when people give themselves up to active business. Although the postmaster was very talkative, even he, as soon as he had taken his cards in his hand, thought fit to assume a thoughtful expression and puckered up his lips. He remained thus all the time that the game lasted. Whenever he played a court-card, however, he smote the table heavily with his hand, saying, if it were the

queen, "Go along, old popess!" and if the king, "Away with you, you Tamboff moujik!" And the president constantly exclaimed, "I've got him by the moustache!" or "I've got her by the moustache!" Sometimes as the cards fell on the table, exclamations resounded such as, "Ah! to be, or not to be"; "There's nothing to be done"; "So there's a diamond!" and so on. At the end of the game the players disputed loudly, and the traveller joined in the discussions, but in a pleasant manner. He never shouted "Go on!" but politely remarked, "Will you have the kindness to play? I have had the honour to cover your ace," and so on.

Then, in order to propitiate his antagonists, he frequently offered them his silver and enamel snuff-box, at the bottom of which they perceived two violets which had been placed there to scent it. His attention was especially directed to Maniloff and Sobakevitch, the landowners already referred to. He immediately made inquiries about them, calling the president and the postmaster on one side for the purpose. Some of the questions he put to them evinced not only his curiosity, but also his solicitude; for the first thing of all that he asked was, how many serfs each of them had, and in what condition their estates were; and after that he informed himself as to their names and surnames. In a short time he had succeeded in charming them completely.

Landowner Maniloff, a middle-aged man who had eyes as sweet as sugar, and screwed them up every time he laughed, was in ecstasies with the traveller. He pressed his hand for a long time, and begged him in the most earnest manner to honour him with a trip to his estate, which, according to his assertions, was only fifteen versts from the city barriers. To this Tchitchikoff replied, with an extremely courteous inclination of the head, and a hearty squeeze of the hand, that he was not only ready to accept the invitation with great pleasure, but that he should consider it a sacred duty to call upon Maniloff.

Sobakevitch, too, said rather laconically, "I invite you to my house also," at the same time giving a backward scrape with his left foot, which was shod with a shoe of gigantic size.

On the following day Tchitchikoff went to dine and spend the evening with the chief of police. They sat down to play at whist at three in the afternoon, and played until two o'clock in the morning. Here he made the acquaintance of a landowner named Nozdreff, a man of thirty, a wide-awake young fellow, who began to address him as *thou* after the first three or four words. Nozdreff also called the chief of police and the procurator *thou*, and behaved in a friendly way; but when they began to play for high stakes, the chief of police and the procurator watched every trick he took with great attention, and followed up almost every card he laid down. Tchitchikoff passed the next evening with the president of the court, who

received his guests in a rather greasy dressing-gown; then he spent an evening with the vice-governor, dined with the farmer of the brandy revenues, attended a small but expensive dinner at the procurator's, and a lunch which was given by the mayor of the town, and which was equivalent to a dinner. In a word, Tchitchikoff was not able to spend a single hour at home, and he only entered the inn to sleep.

The new-comer understood how to adapt himself to every circumstance, and showed that he was an accomplished man of the world. On whatever subject the conversation turned he could always keep it up; if it was a question of breeding horses, he spoke about breeding horses; if his companions talked of fine dogs, he made some very practical observations on that subject; if they discussed the investigations undertaken by the imperial courts of justice, he showed that he was not unacquainted with legal affairs; if a dispute arose over a game at billiards, he was not found wanting in the necessary knowledge; if philanthropy was the subject under discussion, he entered into it very fully, and tears even came into his eyes; moreover, he was well posted as to the distillation of brandy when that was mentioned; and when they talked of the local officials, he passed judgment on them as though he himself were an official.

It was worthy of note, moreover, that our friend Tchitchikoff knew how to impart his views with a fitting gravity of mien, and bore himself admirably. He spoke neither loudly nor softly, but exactly in the proper key. In short, turn him which ever way you would, he was an estimable man. All the officials were delighted with him. The governor expressed himself to the effect that he was a well-meaning man; the procurator said that he was a practical man; the commander of the garrison that he was a learned man; the chief of police that he was a respectable and amiable man; the chief's wife that he was a most agreeable and well-bred man. Even Sobakevitch himself, who rarely expressed a favourable opinion of anyone, when he returned at a tolerably late hour from town, and, having undressed himself, lay down in bed beside his gaunt wife, he said to her, "My love, I spent the evening at the governor's, and dined with the chief of police, and I have made the acquaintance of Collegiate Councillor Pavel Ivanovitch Tchitchikoff—a very agreeable man he is too." Whereupon his spouse replied "H'm!" and gave him a push with her foot.

Such was the very flattering opinion which was formed of Tchitchikoff in the town; and it was maintained until he adopted a very singular course of conduct which threw the entire locality into a state of amazement.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MANILOFF FAMILY

THE strange gentleman had been living in the town for more than a week, going about to evening parties, dinners, and having a very good time of it as people say, when he decided to pay certain visits out of town; for instance, to go and see the landowners Maniloff and Sobakevitch, as he had promised. Selifan, his coachman, was ordered to harness the horses to the well-known britchka early in the morning, while Petrushka was ordered to stay at home, and look after the room and the trunk. The reader already knows that Petrushka wore a rather loose, light-brown surtout, which had belonged to his master, and that, according to the custom with people of his class, he had a very thick nose and thick lips. In character he was reserved, not talkative, and he was even possessed of a noble desire for culture—that is to say, he delighted in reading books. The character of these books was a secondary matter; it was all the same to him whether the work recounted the adventures of a love-enslaved hero, whether it was an ABC book, or a breviary; he read everything with equal attention. If any one had offered him a volume of chemistry he would not have refused it. It was not so much what he read, as the process of reading, that pleased him. He enjoyed the surprise of finding that the letters continually formed some word or other, which at times meant the deuce only knows what. His reading was chiefly accomplished in a recumbent attitude in the ante-room, where he was for ever lying, upon the bedstead and mattress, which became in consequence as flat and as thin as a pancake. In addition to his passion for reading he had two other characteristic traits—he slept without undressing, just as he was, in the same surtout; and he always carried about with him a special atmosphere of his own, a peculiar smell, which corresponded, to some extent, with that of a dwelling-room; so that it sufficed for him merely to install himself somewhere, to take his cloak and belongings there, for people to think that the apartment had been inhabited for fully ten years.

Tchitchikoff, who was very dainty, and even in some respects capricious, frowned when this atmosphere saluted his sensitive nose in the morning, and shook his head, remarking, "The deuce

take it, my good fellow, you are sweating. You ought to have a bath." To this Petrushka made no reply, but immediately busied himself about something, brushed his master's coat, or simply carried some article away. What did he think while he thus remained silent? Perhaps he said to himself, "You're nice! Aren't you tired of repeating the same thing forty times in succession?" God alone knows the truth; it is difficult to find out what a house-serf does think when his master is reading him a lesson. So this is what may be said of Petrushka in the first place.

Tchitchikoff, having given the necessary orders for departure one evening, awoke very early the next morning, washed, wiped himself from head to foot with a damp sponge—which he only did on Sundays, and, indeed that day chanced to be a Sunday—shaved himself in such a way that his cheeks seemed to be real satin in point of smoothness and polish, donned first his cranberry-coloured swallow-tailed coat, and then his cloak lined with long-haired bearskin, and went down-stairs, supported under the arm by the inn-servant. He seated himself in his britchka, which rolled through the gates of the tavern into the street with a great noise. A pope (priest), who was passing, removed his hat; some small boys in dirty blouses extended their hands, saying, "Give alms to the orphans, master!" and the coachman, perceiving that one of them was hanging on behind the carriage, cracked his whip at him; whereupon the britchka went jolting over the stones. It was with delight that Tchitchikoff beheld in the distance the striped turnpike-bar, which announced that there would soon be an end to the pavement as to all other torture; and indeed after striking his head a few times with considerable force against the carriage frame he was at length borne out upon the soft soil. No sooner was the town left behind than upon both sides of the road appeared hillocks, fir-woods, plantations of young pines, the charred trunks of old ones, some wild heather, and so on. Our traveller passed villages stretched out in a line, in architecture resembling piles of firewood, the houses being covered with grey roofs, with carved wooden ornaments beneath them. Some moujiks in their sheepskin jackets, and yawning as usual, were seated on benches outside the gates. Women with fat faces and closely bound bosoms gazed from the upper windows; from the lower ones a calf peeped, or else a pig thrust out his snout. In short, the views were the customary ones. Having covered fifteen versts, Tchitchikoff recollected that, according to Maniloff's account, his estate must be situated somewhere about there; however, the sixteenth-verst stone flew past, and still no village was visible. In fact, had it not been for two moujiks who chanced to come along, our hero would hardly have succeeded in reaching his destination. At the query, "Is it far to Zamanilovka village?" the moujiks removed their caps, and one of them, who was the more sensible

of the two, and who wore a long beard, replied, "Manilovka, possibly, but not Zamanilovka."

"Well, then, Manilovka."

"Manilovka! You must go on a verst farther, and then turn to the right."

"To the right?" repeated the coachman.

"To the right," said the moujik. "That is the road to Manilovka, but there is no Zamanilovka. It is called so,—that is, its name is Manilovka; and there's no Zamanilovka at all. There, right on the hill, you will see a two-floor house built of stone; that's the owner's house; that is, the gentleman himself lives there. That's Manilovka for you; but there's no Zamanilovka whatever here, and never has been."

They drove on in search of Manilovka. After going two versts farther, they came to a turning into a cross-country road; but they covered two, three, and even four versts apparently, and still no two-floor stone house was visible. Then Tchitchikoff recollected, that if a friend invites you to visit him at a village fifteen versts off, it means that it is certainly situated about thirty versts away. This proved to be the case as regards Manilovka. The seigneurial house stood alone on a height, exposed to every wind which blew: the slope of the hill upon which it was perched was covered with short turf. Upon it, in the English fashion, were scattered two or three clumps of shrubbery—lilac-bushes, and acacias, with five or six birch-trees rearing their fine-leaved, slender crests. Beneath two of them a summer house was visible, with a green cupola, blue wooden columns, and the inscription, "The Temple of Solitary Meditation." Lower down there was a pond, covered with green scum, which is no novelty in the English gardens belonging to the Russian landed gentry. At the foot of the hill and also partly on the declivity itself, some wooden cottages stood out, and our hero for some unknown reason began to count them on the spot, and reckoned up over two hundred. Nowhere among them was there a tree or any particle of green stuff: nothing whatever but smooth boards.

The view was enlivened by two women, who with their dresses picturesquely tucked up, were wading up to their knees in the pond, dragging a torn net, in which one could espy two entangled crabs and a glistening flatfish. These women seemed to be quarrelling, and upbraiding each other about something. Far off on one side a pine-forest stretched monotonously blue. The sky was neither clear nor cloudy, but of a light-grey tint; and to complete the picture, there was a cock, that prophet of a change of weather, who, although he had been sorely treated by other cocks, on account of certain matters connected with courtship, crowed very loudly, and even flapped his wings, which were as frowsy as old rugs.

As Tchitchikoff drove into the courtyard, he perceived Maniloff himself standing under the verandah, in a green shalloon coat,

and with his hand pressed to his brow, so as to form a screen for his eyes, with which he was surveying the approaching equipage. As the britchka came near to the verandah, his eyes grew merrier, and his smile became broader and broader.

"Pavel Ivanovitch!" he exclaimed at length, as Tchitchikoff descended from the britchka. "So you have remembered us at last!"

The two friends kissed each other heartily, and Maniloff led his guest indoors. This landowner was a well-favoured man in personal appearance: his features were agreeable, but they indicated that he was rather too much permeated with sugar. There was something about his manners and ways indicating that he sought favour and acquaintanceship. He smiled seductively, was of a fair complexion, and had blue eyes. You could not help saying, the first moment you spoke with him, "What a nice agreeable man!" The next moment you would say nothing; but at the third you would remark, "The deuce knows what this fellow is like!" and you would go off as far away from him as possible; in fact if you did not retreat, you would feel bored to death. You expected no quick or arrogant word from him, such as you may hear from almost any person if you touch upon a subject he dislikes. Maniloff never displayed a bad temper; nor had he any hobbies or peculiarities. At home he said very little, and was mostly occupied in thought and meditation; but the subject of his thoughts was probably known to God alone. It is impossible to say that he busied himself with the management of his estate, for he never even went into the fields, and affairs seemed to manage themselves. When the steward said, "It would be as well, sir, to do so and so,"—"Yes: it would not be bad," was his customary reply, as he puffed away at his pipe, which had become a habit with him when he served in the army, where he had been considered the most discreet, most delicate, and the most accomplished, of officers. "Yes, it really would not be bad," he repeated.

When a moujik came to him, and said, as he scratched the back of his head, "Master, pray let me leave my work, allow me to earn something,"—"Go," he replied as he smoked his pipe; and it never even entered his head that the moujik had gone off on a drunken carouse. Sometimes, as he gazed from the verandah at the yard and the pond, he said that it would be as well if an underground passage could be made from the house, or if a stone bridge were built across the pond with booths on each side, where dealers might sit and sell the various small wares required by the peasants. At such times, his eyes became particularly sweet, and his face assumed a most satisfied expression.

However, all these projects were confined to words alone. Some book or other was always lying in his study, with a mark at the fourteenth page; a book which he had been reading

constantly for the last two years. There was forever something lacking in the house: in the drawing-room, there was some very handsome furniture, covered with an elegant silken material, which certainly must have cost a high price; but on two of the arm-chairs it was missing, and they were simply covered with rugs. For several years, Maniloff had said to his visitors, "Don't sit down on those chairs, they are not ready yet." In one room of the house, too, there was no furniture at all; though directly after his marriage he had remarked, "My love, we must see about putting some furniture into that room to-morrow, if only for a time." In the evening a very handsome candlestick of dark bronze, representing the three Graces, and with an elegant mother-of-pearl shade, was placed upon the table, and beside it was set a plain brass candlestick, which was lame, twisted on one side, and all covered with tallow, although neither master, mistress, nor servants perceived it.

Maniloff and his wife were perfectly satisfied with each other. In spite of the fact that they had been married for more than eight years, each was constantly offering the other a bit of apple, or a sugar-plum, or a nut, and saying in a touchingly tender voice, expressive of the most perfect affection, "Open your little mouth, my soul, and I will put this tidbit in." Of course the little mouth opened very gracefully on such occasions. Surprises were prepared for birthdays, such as a mother-of-pearl case for a toothbrush. And very frequently, as the husband and the wife sat on the sofa, the former would suddenly abandon his pipe, for some utterly inscrutable cause, and the other her work, if she chanced to have any in her hand at the time, and they would imprint upon each other's lips such a long and languishing kiss, that a cigarette might have been smoked during the time it lasted. In a word, they were what is called happy. But it may be observed that there are many other occupations in a house besides indulging in prolonged kisses and surprises; and many different questions might have been put to the Maniloff couple. Why, for instance, did matters go on so stupidly and senselessly in the kitchen? Why was the storeroom so empty? Why have a thief for housekeeper? Why were the servants dirty and intoxicated? Why did they all sleep so unmercifully, or spend their time in playing pranks? But all these are trivial subjects, for Madame Manilova had been to a boarding school; and a good education is received in boarding-schools, as is well known. Three principal subjects there constitute the foundation of human virtue,—the French language, which is indispensable to family happiness; the pianoforte, necessary to afford pleasant moments to a husband; and lastly, come matters of domestic management,—such as knitting purses, and other surprises.

But let us return to our heroes, who have been standing for several minutes before the drawing-room door, entreating each other to enter first.

"Pray do not put yourself out so much for me; I will follow you," said Tchitchikoff.

"No, Pavel Ivanovitch, no; you are a guest," said Maniloff, pointing to the door.

"Pray do not object; I beg that you will enter," rejoined Tchitchikoff.

"No, excuse me. I will not permit such a pleasant and accomplished guest to walk behind me."

"Why accomplished? Please go in."

"Well, then, please pass in yourself."

"But why?"

"Well, because," said Maniloff, with a pleasant smile.

Finally the two friends passed through the doorway side by side, crowding each other a little in the process.

"Allow me to present my wife to you," said Maniloff. "My love, Pavel Ivanovitch."

Then Tchitchikoff saw a lady, whom he had not yet even noticed, saluting him and Maniloff. She was pretty, and becomingly dressed. Her loose gown of pale silk suited her well. With one of her small, delicate hands she hastily flung something on the table, and then, clasping a cambric handkerchief with embroidered corners, she rose from the divan on which she was seated. Tchitchikoff approached to kiss her hand. Mrs. Manilova, with rather a strong roll on her *r*'s, declared that he had greatly delighted them by his arrival, and that her husband never let a day pass by without mentioning him.

"Yes," added Maniloff, "she has got into the habit of asking me, 'Why does not your friend come?' 'Wait, my love,' I say, 'he will come.' And now he has at length favoured us with a visit. Truly, he has afforded us the same pleasure as one feels in May, on the anniversary of the heart."

Tchitchikoff became a little embarrassed when he heard that affairs had already got as far as the anniversary of the heart, and he modestly replied that he possessed neither a great name nor any distinguished rank.

"You have everything," broke in Maniloff with the same pleasant smile; "you have all that, and even more."

"How did our town strike you?" added Mrs. Manilova. "Did you pass the time pleasantly there?"

"It is a very fine town, a very beautiful town," replied Tchitchikoff, "and I spent the time most agreeably; the society there is very friendly."

"And how did you like our governor?" asked Mrs. Manilova.

"He is a very dignified and amiable person, is he not?" added Maniloff.

"Quite true," said Tchitchikoff; "a most worthy man. And how he enters into his duties! how well he understands them! It would be well if there were a few more such men."

"Yes, how well he understands the way to receive people,

and behave discreetly and courteously!" chimed in Maniloff, with a smile, and almost closing his eyes with pleasure, like a cat whom one is tickling gently behind the ears with one's finger.

"He is a very sociable and agreeable man," continued Tchitchikoff; "and what an artist! I should never even have imagined such a thing! How well he embroiders! He gave me a purse of his workmanship; even a lady who can embroider so tastefully is seldom seen."

"And the vice-governor—what a nice man he is, is he not?" said Maniloff, again drawing his eyelids down a little.

"A very, very worthy man," replied Tchitchikoff.

"Well, and pray how did the chief of police impress you? He is a very agreeable man, is he not?"

"Extremely agreeable; and what a sensible, well-read man! We played whist with him, and the procurator, and the president of the court, until the cocks crowed. A very, very worthy man."

"Well, and what is your opinion of the chief-of-police's wife?" added Mrs. Manilova. "She is a very charming woman, is she not?"

"Oh, she is one of the most estimable women I know," replied Tchitchikoff.

After this they dealt with the president of the court and the postmaster; and in this way they spoke of nearly all the officials in the town, who all seemed to be most estimable persons.

"Do you always live in the country?" asked Tchitchikoff, at length putting a question in his turn.

"Principally in the country," answered Maniloff. "Sometimes, however, we go to town for the purpose of meeting cultivated people. One gets rusty, you know, if one lives all the time shut up."

"True, true," said Tchitchikoff.

"Of course," continued Maniloff, "it would be a different thing if the neighbourhood were good—if, for instance, there were a man with whom one could in any way discuss amiability, good breeding, or follow up any science which would stir the soul, and impart a lofty flight, so to speak, to ——" Here he wished to express something or other, and, perceiving that he had already conveyed some idea of his meaning, he simply waved his hand in the air, and went on. "Then, of course, the country and solitude would possess many charms. But there is absolutely no one hereabouts. Why, one merely reads the 'Son of the Fatherland' now and then."

Tchitchikoff perfectly agreed with his entertainer, adding that, in his mind, nothing could be more delightful than to live in solitude, and enjoy the spectacle of nature, and sometimes read some book or other.

"But then, you know," said Maniloff, "if you have no friend with whom you can share——"

"Oh, that is true, quite true," interrupted Tchitchikoff. "What are all the treasures in the world under such circumstances? 'Possess not money, possess good people for associates,' said a certain wise man."

"And do you know, Pavel Ivanovitch," said Maniloff, with a look of mingled sweetness and hypocrisy, "with a true friend one experiences something in the nature of spiritual enjoyment? For instance, when chance afforded me the happiness, the signal happiness, I may say, of talking to you, and of enjoying your charming conversation——"

"Oh, really, now, what charming conversation do you mean? I am an insignificant man, and nothing more," replied Tchitchikoff.

"O Pavel Ivanovitch! allow me to be frank. I would gladly give the half of all my possessions to acquire even a portion of your merits."

"On the contrary, I, for my part, should regard it as the greatest——"

No one knows what this mutual outpouring of sentiment would have led to, if a servant had not announced at that moment that dinner was ready.

"I beg of you humbly," said Maniloff, "to remain and dine with us. You will excuse us if our dinner is not like what people serve in capital cities; we simply have cabbage soup, after the Russian fashion, but we offer it with a pure heart. I most respectfully beg of you to join us."

Then they disputed for a while as to who should go first; and finally Tchitchikoff entered the dining-room side by side with them.

In the dining-room stood two boys, Maniloff's sons, who were of that age when children are seated at table in high chairs. Beside them stood their tutor, who bowed and smiled politely. The hostess seated herself behind the soup tureen; the guest was placed between the host and hostess, and a servant fastened napkins round the children's necks.

"What charming children!" said Tchitchikoff, gazing at them. "How old are they?"

"The elder is eight; the other was six only yesterday," said Mrs. Manilova.

"Themistoclus," said Maniloff, turning to the elder boy, who was trying to free his chin from the napkin which the lackey had tied about it. Tchitchikoff elevated his eyebrows on hearing this Grecian name, to which Maniloff, for some unknown reason, had given the termination *us;* but he immediately tried to restore his countenance to its wonted expression.

"Tell me, Themistoclus, which is the finest city in France?"

Here the tutor directed his whole attention upon Themistoclus, and seemed to want to fly at him; but he became quite composed again, and nodded his head approvingly, when Themistoclus said "Paris."

"And what is our finest city," asked Maniloff.

Again the tutor turned his attention upon the boy.

"Petersburg," replied Themistoclus.

"And still another?"

"Moscow," replied Themistoclus.

"You clever darling," said Tchitchikoff. "But do you know," he continued, instantly turning to Maniloff with a look of some surprise. "But do you know this child possesses great capacity."

"Oh, you don't know him yet!" replied Maniloff; "he is very clever indeed. Here's the younger one, Alcides, he is not so quick; but the elder one, if he comes across a beetle, his little eyes begin to dance all at once, and he runs after it and directs his attention to it immediately. I shall put him into the diplomatic service. Themistoclus," he again began, turning to the youngster, "do you want to be an ambassador?"

"Yes," replied Themistoclus, chewing away at his bread, and wagging his head from right to left.

Just at that moment the footman, who stood behind the embryo ambassador, wiped his nose, and it was as well that he did so, for otherwise something unpleasant would have fallen into the soup.

During dinner the conversation turned upon the pleasures of a quiet life, interspersed with remarks from the hostess about the theatres and the actors in the town. The tutor looked very attentively at the speakers, and as soon as he perceived that they were about to smile, he invariably opened his mouth and laughed heartily. He was probably a grateful person, and wished in this manner to repay the host for his good treatment. Once, however, his countenance assumed a gloomy expression, and he struck the table sternly, fixing his eyes upon the children, who sat opposite him. This happened when Themistoclus bit Alcides's ear, and when Alcides, with his eyes puckered up, and mouth wide open, seemed about to sob in the most pitiful manner. However, realising that he might be deprived of some dish by way of punishment, he brought his mouth back to its former position, and with tears in his eyes began to gnaw a mutton bone, which caused both his cheeks to shine with grease.

The hostess turned to Tchitchikoff very frequently, saying, "You are not eating anything; you have taken very little."

To which Tchitchikoff each time replied, "I am greatly obliged; I am full. Agreeable conversation is better than any dish whatever."

Finally, they all rose from the table. Maniloff was extremely well-pleased; and supporting his friend's back with his hand, he was on the point of conducting him to the drawing-room, when suddenly Tchitchikoff announced, with a very important look, that he desired to speak with him on a momentous subject.

"In that case, permit me to invite you into my study," said Maniloff; and he led him into a small room where the windows looked out upon the blue forest. "This is my little nook," he added.

"A pleasant little room," remarked Tchitchikoff, casting his eyes about it. The room was really not unpleasant; the walls were painted a greyish-blue colour. There were four chairs, one arm-chair, a table upon which lay the little book with the marker of which we have already had occasion to speak, and some papers covered with writing. However, there was more tobacco than anything else. It was in various forms—in paper packages, in boxes, and even piled in a heap on the table. On the sills of both windows, various piles of ashes, shaken out of pipes, were arranged with some attempt at an ornamental disposition. It was evident that this occasionally afforded Maniloff a means of whiling his time away.

"Permit me to request you to place yourself in this arm-chair," he said. "You will be more comfortable here."

"No; allow me to sit upon an ordinary chair."

"That cannot be allowed, if you please," resumed Maniloff with a smile. "My arm-chair is expressly assigned to guests; whether you like it or not, you must sit in it."

Tchitchikoff sat down.

"Permit me to offer you a pipe," said his host.

"No; I do not smoke," replied Tchitchikoff politely, and with a certain air of regret.

"Why?" asked Maniloff also politely, and with an air of regret.

"I have never acquired the habit of smoking; a pipe is said to dry one up."

"Permit me to remark that that is prejudice. I even hold that smoking a pipe is much more healthy than taking snuff. There was a lieutenant in our regiment, a very handsome and cultivated man, who never took his pipe out of his mouth, not even when he was at table or anywhere else, if I may say so. And now he is over forty; and, thank God, up to the present time he is so well that he could not possibly be better."

Tchitchikoff remarked that that really did happen at times, and that there were many things in nature which could not be explained by even the most far-seeing minds.

"But permit me now to ask one question," he began in a tone in which there was a strange, or almost a strange, expression, and then he glanced behind him, it is impossible to say why. Maniloff also glanced behind him for some inexplicable reason. "How long is it," resumed Tchitchikoff, "since you condescended to hand in your census list?"

"Why, a long while, or rather, I don't recollect."

"So that many of your serfs have died since?"

"I cannot say. I suppose it will be necessary to ask the

overseer about that. Hey, there, you fellow! Call the overseer; he should be here to-day."

The overseer made his appearance. He was a man of about forty, who shaved his beard, wore a surtout, and apparently led a very tranquil life, for there was a certain look of puffy fulness in his face and a yellowish hue about his skin; moreover, his small, sleepy eyes showed that he knew very well indeed what down-pillows and feather-beds were.

"Listen, my good fellow," said Maniloff. "How many of our serfs have died since the census was taken?"

"Yes, well—how many? Why, many have died since then," said the overseer; and thereupon he gave a yawn, covering his mouth slightly with his hand as with a shield.

"Yes; I will confess that I thought so myself," interposed Maniloff; "that's it, a good many have died." Here he turned to Tchitchikoff and added, "Exactly so, a great many."

"And what might the number be, for instance?" asked Tchitchikoff.

"Yes, what number?" interposed Maniloff.

"Well, I might say, what is the number?" rejoined the overseer. "Why, really I don't know how many have died; nobody has counted them."

"Yes, exactly," said Maniloff, turning to Tchitchikoff. "I also supposed that the mortality had been large; but I don't know in the least how many have died."

"Please to count them," said Tchitchikoff, "and make a minute register of them by name."

"Yes, all by name," said Maniloff, whereupon the overseer rejoined, "Yes, sir," and departed.

"And why do you want this done?" inquired Maniloff when the overseer was gone.

This question seemed to embarrass his guest; a certain strained look appeared on his face and even caused it to redden as he made an effort to express himself. Then Maniloff heard such strange and remarkable things as human ear had never before listened to.

"You ask the reason? Well, this is the reason; I should like to purchase some serfs," began Tchitchikoff, but then he stammered and did not finish his sentence.

"But allow me to ask you," said Maniloff, "how you desire to purchase these serfs—with the land, or simply for removal elsewhere; that is to say, without land?"

"Well, I don't exactly mean serfs," said Tchitchikoff, "I want dead ones."

"What? Excuse me, I am a little hard of hearing; I thought I heard a very singular word."

"My desire is to obtain dead serfs, who are, however, indicated as alive in the census list," said Tchitchikoff.

Maniloff instantly dropped his tchibouk on the floor, and,

opening his mouth, remained gaping for several minutes. These two friends who had discoursed so sweetly on the charms of a life of friendship, remained motionless, with their eyes fixed on each other like those portraits which were hung in olden times opposite one another. At length Maniloff picked up his tchibouk and gazed into Tchitchikoff's face, endeavouring to see whether there was any sign of a smile upon his lips, in fact, whether he was jesting; but nothing of the sort was perceptible; on the contrary, his face seemed even graver than usual. Then Maniloff wondered whether his guest had not unconsciously lost his mind, and he gazed intently at him in terror; but our hero's eyes were perfectly clear; there was no wild, restless fire in them, such as leaps from the eyes of a madman; all was quiet in his demeanour and as it should be. Think as he would as to what he ought to do or say, Maniloff could not devise any other course than to emit the smoke which had remained in his mouth.

"Yes, I should like to know," resumed Tchitchikoff, "whether you can let me have any such persons, not alive in reality, but alive so far as legal forms are concerned. Make them over to me, or manage it in any way you think best."

However, Maniloff became so confused and troubled that all he could do was to stare at him.

"It seems to me that you see some difficulties?" observed Tchitchikoff.

"I? no, not that," said Maniloff, "but I cannot conceive—excuse me—in fact, I was not able to obtain so brilliant an education as is visible, so to speak, in your every movement. I do not possess the lofty art of expressing myself, and possibly, in the statement which you have just made, something else is concealed—possibly you were pleased to express yourself in that way for the sake of beauty of style?"

"No," responded Tchitchikoff, "no: I meant just what I said; that is to say, souls (serfs) which are actually already dead."

Maniloff was completely bewildered. He felt that he must do something, ask some question, but what question—the deuce only knew. He at last ended by emitting some more smoke, not from his mouth, however, but through his nostrils.

"So, if there is no obstacle, you might set about preparing a deed of sale," said Tchitchikoff.

"What! a deed of the sale of some dead souls?"

"Well, no!" said Tchitchikoff. "We will write that they are alive, just as it stands recorded on the census list. I am not accustomed to depart in any way from the laws; I suffered for that reason in the service—but excuse me: duty is a sacred thing for me; the law—well, I am dumb in the presence of the law."

These last words pleased Maniloff. Still he had not penetrated his guest's real meaning; and, instead of replying, he began to suck away so powerfully at his tchibouk, that it soon groaned

like a bassoon. It seemed as though he were trying to extract from it some opinion with regard to so strange a matter; however, the tchibouk groaned, and that was all.

"Perhaps you entertain some doubts?" urged Tchitchikoff.

"Oh, excuse me, none whatever! But permit me to ask, will not this enterprise, or to express the matter more plainly, as it were, this negotiation,—will not this negotiation be incompatible with the official regulations?"

Here Maniloff made several motions with his head, and looked very significantly in Tchitchikoff's face; his countenance having an expression of such deep meaning as was, possibly, never seen upon a human face, except, perhaps, on that of some very wise minister, at the moment of a most head-splitting transaction.

However, Tchitchikoff simply said that such an enterprise, or negotiation, would in no way be inconsistent with the laws; and he added a moment later, that the treasury would even obtain some profit from it, for it would receive the legal taxes.

"You think so?"

"Yes, I think that it will be a good thing."

"Ah! if it is a good thing, that is another matter: I have no objection to it then," said Maniloff, and he became perfectly reassured.

"It now remains for us to agree about a price."

"What price?" said Maniloff again; and he paused. "Do you suppose that I am going to take your money for souls who have, in a certain way, terminated their existence? If such a fantastic idea has occurred to you, you are mistaken. I will give you these souls gratuitously, and take the deed of sale upon myself."

We must not omit to say that Tchitchikoff expressed great satisfaction upon hearing these words spoken by Maniloff. Albeit usually grave and judicious, he came near executing a leap like a goat, which, as it is well known, men only execute in the most powerful outbursts of joy. He turned so vigorously in his chair, that he split the material with which it was covered. Maniloff stared at him in some amazement. Moved by gratitude, our hero expressed so much recognition, that his host became confused, turned red all over, made a negative gesture with his head, and finally expressed himself to the effect that it was really "nothing"; that he merely wanted to show his heartfelt affection in some way, for he was a believer in the affinity of souls; however to his mind the dead ones were in some respects perfect rubbish.

"They are not rubbish at all," replied Tchitchikoff, pressing his companion's hand and heaving a deep sigh. He seemed to be ready for a sentimental outburst, and it was not without feeling and expression that he at length uttered the following words: "If you only knew what a service you have rendered

me by this, which seems to you mere rubbish; and yet I am a man without kindred or connections! Yes; and, in fact, what have I not endured? I am like a bark amid fierce billows. Ah! what oppression, what persecution, have I not undergone, what bitterness have I not tasted, and for what? Because I held to the Right, because I had a pure conscience, because I lent a helping hand to a helpless widow and wretched orphans——"

At this point Tchitchikoff even wiped away his tears with his handkerchief. Maniloff was thoroughly moved. The two friends pressed each other's hands for a long time, and gazed long and silently into each other's eyes, in which the tears were visible. Maniloff would, on no account, release the hand of our hero, but continued to press it so warmly that his companion did not know how to free it. At last, drawing it gently away, he said that it would not be a bad thing to complete the deed of sale as promptly as possible, and that it would be as well if Maniloff would visit him in town; finally he grasped his hat, and began to take leave.

"What! are you going?" asked Maniloff, suddenly recovering himself, and almost in affright.

At that moment Mrs. Manilova entered the study.

"Lisanka," said Maniloff, with a rather sorry countenance, "Pavel Ivanovitch is leaving us."

"Then, we have bored Pavel Ivanovitch," replied Mrs. Manilova.

"Madame! here," exclaimed Tchitchikoff, "here, just here," —and he laid his hand upon his heart,—"yes, here, will ever linger the charming hours spent with you; and believe me, there could not be for me any greater bliss than to live with you, if not in the same house, at least in the immediate neighbourhood."

"But, do you know, Pavel Ivanovitch," said Maniloff, who was greatly pleased by such an idea, "it would in fact be grand for us to live here together under one roof, or beneath the shade of some elm-tree, to philosophise over something, to penetrate the depths——"

"Oh, that would be a heavenly life!" interrupted Tchitchikoff, with a sigh. "Farewell, madame!" he continued, kissing Mrs. Manilova's hand. "Farewell, my most respected friend! Do not forget my request!"

"Oh! you may be easy on that score," replied Maniloff. "I shall see you in town in a couple of days at the latest."

They all then went into the dining-room.

"Good-bye, my dear little boys!" said Tchitchikoff, catching sight of Alcides and Themistoclus, who were busying themselves over a wooden hussar who had neither any arms nor any nose. "Good-bye, my dear little ones. You will excuse me for not having brought you a present, but I must confess that I did not

even know of your existence; however, when I come again, I shall certainly bring one. I will bring you a sword: would you like a sword?"

"Yes," answered Themistoclus.

"And a drum for you. It shall be a drum, shall it not?" he proceeded, bending down to Alcides.

"Yes, a dwum," whispered Alcides, and he dropped his head.

"Very well, I will bring you a drum, such a fine drum! it will be all turrr-ru-tra, ta ta, ta ta ta. Good-bye, you darling, good-bye!" Here he kissed Alcides on the head, and turned to Maniloff and his wife with the little laugh with which one generally does turn to parents, giving them to understand what dear little things their children are.

"Really, you had better stay, Pavel Ivanovitch," said Maniloff, when they were all gathered on the verandah. "Look at the clouds."

"They are very small," replied Tchitchikoff.

"Do you know the road to Sobakevitch's?"

"Oh! I wanted to ask you about that."

"Well, if you will allow me, I will tell your coachman at once." Here Maniloff, with the same affability, gave the coachman his instructions, even addressing him once by the pronoun "you"—in lieu of the "thou" usual in speaking to inferiors.

The coachman, on hearing that he must pass by two turnings, and take the third one, said, "We shall hit it, your excellency"; and Tchitchikoff drove off, accompanied by the bows and waving kerchiefs of his hosts, who stood watching him on tiptoe.

Maniloff, indeed, stood for a long time on the verandah, following the retreating britchka with his eyes; and even when it had become invisible, he still stood there, smoking his pipe. At last he entered the room, seated himself on a chair, and gave himself up to meditation, heartily rejoicing that he had done his visitor a trifling service. Then his thoughts turned imperceptibly to other subjects, and finally they wandered away, God knows where. He thought of the bliss of a life of friendship; of how delightful it would be to dwell with his friend on the banks of some river; and so on; but suddenly Tchitchikoff's strange request disturbed all his dreams. The thought of it seemed to seethe strangely in his brain; turn it over as he would, he could not explain it to himself; and thus he sat smoking his pipe, and pondering all through the afternoon and evening until supper-time.

CHAPTER THREE

MADAME KOROBOTCHKINA

MEANWHILE Tchitchikoff, in a very well-satisfied frame of mind, sat in his britchka, which had long been rolling along the highway. From the preceding chapter, one can gather what constituted the chief subject of his thoughts; and therefore it is no wonder that he was speedily absorbed in it, body and soul. That the conjectures, calculations, and fancies which strayed through his mind were extremely agreeable, was evident from his face; for at each moment it expanded into a contented smile. He was so engrossed with his thoughts that it required a loud clap of thunder to bring him to himself, and induce him to look about him: the whole sky was now completely covered with clouds, and the dusty post-road was sprinkled with drops of rain. At length a second clap of thunder resounded, both louder and nearer than the first one, and the rain suddenly poured down as though from a pail. At first it came in a slanting direction, and beat upon one side of the britchka, then on the other; next altering its course, and becoming almost perpendicular, it drummed right upon the top of the carriage, and began to fall on our hero's head. This made him pull down some leathern curtains, which had two small round windows, adapted for the contemplation of views upon the road, and at the same time he ordered Selifan to drive faster.

The coachman drew from beneath his box some trumpery garment of grey cloth, put it on, grasped the reins firmly, and shouted at his *troika*,* which were hardly moving their legs. However, Selifan could not at first remember whether he had passed two or three turnings. He decided, after due reflection, that there had been a great many, all of which he had passed. As a Russian soon discovers what to do in critical moments, he turned into the first cross-road he next came to, on the right, shouted, "Hey, there my respected friends!" to the horses, and set off at a gallop, without much concern as to where the cross-road would lead him.

The rain, however, seemed likely to last for a long time. The dust of the road was quickly converted into mud, and every moment it became more difficult for the horses to drag the

* A team of three horses.

britchka along. Tchitchikoff had already begun to grow seriously disquieted at not seeing Sobakevitch's village. According to his calculations, they ought to have reached it long ago. He peered out on all sides, but it was now pitch dark.

"Selifan!" he said at last, leaning out of the britchka.

"What is it, master?" replied Selifan.

"Look and see if there is a village visible."

"No, master, there isn't one visible anywhere." And thereupon Selifan, with a flourish of his whip, began, not exactly a song, but something which had no end. Everything entered into it,—all the cries of approbation and encouragement to which horses are treated throughout Russia, from one end of the land to the other; adjectives of every description without discrimination—in fact, the first that came to his tongue. And so it went on until, at last, he began to call the poor animals secretaries.

Meanwhile, Tchitchikoff noticed that the britchka was swaying about in all directions, and that he was being badly jolted. This warned him that they had got out of the road, and were probably careering through a ploughed field. Selifan seemed to have perceived it himself, but he said not a word.

"Here, you rascal, what road are you driving on?" cried Tchitchikoff.

"But what's to be done, master, in such weather? you can't see your whip before you, it's so dark!" Thus speaking the coachman tipped the britchka, so that Tchitchikoff was obliged to hold on with both hands. It was only then that he perceived that Selifan had been drinking.

"Hold on, hold on! you'll upset us!" he shouted to him.

"No, master; how could I upset you?" said Selifan. "It isn't good to upset,—I know that myself already: I sha'n't upset at all." Thereupon he began to turn the britchka slightly, tip, tip, until finally he rolled it over on one side. Tchitchikoff fell full length into the mud. However, Selifan stopped the horses, who would, indeed, have stopped of themselves, for they were greatly fatigued. This unforeseen catastrophe completely amazed the driver. Extricating himself from his box, he planted himself in front of the britchka, set both arms akimbo on his hips, and while his master was floundering about in the mud, and endeavouring to crawl out of it, he said after some reflection, "Well; so it *has* tipped over!"

"You're as drunk as a cobbler," retorted Tchitchikoff.

"No, master, no. Besides, how is it possible for me to be drunk? I know that it is not a good thing to drink. I had a chat with a friend; for one may chat with a good fellow, and there's nothing wrong in that; and we also had something to eat together. A snack (*zakuska*) is not a disgraceful thing: a fellow may fairly take a bite with a nice companion."

"What did I tell you the last time that you were intoxicated, eh? have you forgotten?" asked Tchitchikoff.

"No, your *blagoródiue*,* how could I have forgotten? I know my business. I know that it is not right to get drunk. But I had a chat with a fine man, for——"

"I'll thrash you! I'll teach you to chat with a fine man!"

"As your clemency pleases," replied Selifan, in complete acquiescence: "if you must thrash me, then thrash away. I have no objection to that. And why not beat me, if there is cause for it? That is according to the master's will. It is necessary for him to beat, for the moujik often becomes ungovernable: he must be well looked after. If there is cause for it, then beat away: why not?"

To this reasoning the master found no answer whatever. But at that moment it seemed as though fate had resolved to be merciful to them. The barking of a dog resounded in the distance, and Tchitchikoff, in delight, ordered the horses to be whipped up. The Russian driver possesses a fine sense of hearing in lieu of eyes; hence it happens that although he sometimes drives along at full speed, with his eyes screwed up, he always comes out somewhere. Selifan, without being able to see his hand before him, drove so directly to the village that he only drew up when the britchka stopped short with its shaft against a fence, and when it could actually go no farther. Through the thick veil of pouring rain, Tchitchikoff could merely perceive something resembling a roof. He despatched Selifan to find a gate; and this would have required a long time, no doubt, if in Russia people did not keep ill-tempered dogs in lieu of doorkeepers; and a dog, indeed, now loudly announced the britchka's arrival. A light twinkled through one small window, and reached the fence, revealing the gate to our travellers. Selifan began to knock: and soon a person draped in an *armyak*† opened the wicket, whereupon the master and man heard a hoarse, feminine voice asking, "Who knocks? what has happened?"

"We are travellers, my good woman: let us in to pass the night," said Tchitchikoff.

"You're lively travellers!" rejoined the old woman: "nice weather you have come in! This isn't a post-house: a landowner lives here."

"But what is to be done, my good woman? We have lost our way. We cannot pass the night on the steppe, in such weather as this."

"Yes: it is dark, and the weather is bad," added Selifan.

"Hold your tongue, you blockhead!" said Tchitchikoff.

"Who are you?" asked the old woman.

"A nobleman, my good woman."

The word "nobleman" seemed to give the old woman matter for thought. "Wait! I'll tell the mistress," she ejaculated.

* Well born, equivalent to the German "wohlgeboren." There is no exact equivalent in English.

† A long, full garment, worn by peasants.

In a couple of minutes she returned with a lantern in her hand. The gate opened. A faint light flashed from another window. The britchka entered the yard, and came to a standstill in front of a small house, of which it was difficult to get a good view through the darkness. Only one half of it was illuminated by the light which shone through the window falling upon a puddle just in front of the building. The rain resounded noisily as it poured on to the wooden roof, whence it ran in a murmuring stream into the water-butt. Meanwhile the dogs had burst out barking in every possible key and style; one, throwing back his head, gave a prolonged howl, with as much care as though he had received wages for it; another followed suit post-haste. Then there rang out, like a post-bell, an inharmonious soprano, no doubt belonging to a young dog; and, finally, all ended with the growls of an old animal, whose notes reminded one of a contrabasso in a church choir, when the concerto is in full swing.

However, our drenched and shivering hero thought only of bed. The britchka had not come to a full stop, when he leapt out upon the threshold, tottered, and came near falling. A woman, younger than the first one, but strongly resembling her, then emerged from under the porch and conducted him into a room. Tchitchikoff cast a couple of fleeting glances about him: the room was hung with antique, striped paper; the pictures represented various birds; between the windows hung some little old mirrors, with dim frames in the form of twisted leaves, and behind each mirror was tucked either a letter or a pack of cards, or else a stocking. There was also a wall-clock, with flowers painted on the dial-plate; but nothing else could be discerned. Tchitchikoff felt that his eyes were sticking together as though someone had smeared them over with honey. However, a moment later the mistress of the house entered, a woman advanced in years, in some sort of a nightcap hastily donned, and with a flannel wrapper round her neck. Evidently one of those women who own a small landed property, and cry over bad crops and losses, who hold their heads on one side, and accumulate money in motley little bags, stowed away in their chests of drawers. In one bag they will put all their silver roubles; in another, their half-roubles; in a third, their twenty-five copeck pieces—although, to all appearance, there is nothing in the drawers but linen, night-dresses, skeins of thread, and a cloak which has been ripped up with the intention of converting it into a gown; or, if it be old, it has been burnt in cooking holiday pancakes, or has simply worn out of its own accord. However, the old woman is economical, and this cloak is destined to lie there for many years, and will descend by will to her grandniece, together with all sorts of other ancient fripperies.

Tchitchikoff presented his apologies for having disturbed the inmates of the house by his unexpected arrival. "No matter, no matter," said his hostess. "In such weather, it was God

who brought you here. Such a tumult and storm! You ought to have something to eat after your journey; but it is very late at night, and it is impossible to prepare anything."

The lady's words were interrupted by a dreadful hissing, which alarmed our friend; the noise was such, indeed, that the whole room seemed to be full of snakes: but on glancing up, he felt re-assured, for he perceived that the wall-clock had taken a fancy to strike. The hissing was immediately followed by a hoarse rattle; and finally, collecting all its powers, the clock struck two with a sound as though some one were drumming on a broken crock with a stick, after which the pendulum went on ticking quietly from right to left.

Tchitchikoff thanked his hostess, saying that he needed nothing, that she must not trouble herself about anything, that he only desired a bed, though he would like to know where he was, and whether the house was far from Sobakevitch's estate. To which the old woman replied that she had never even heard of such a name, and believed that there was no such gentleman at all.

"But at least, you know Maniloff?" said Tchitchikoff.

"And who is Maniloff?"

"A landowner, my good woman."

"No, I have never heard of him: there is no such landowner hereabouts."

"What landowners are there then?"

"Bobroff, Svinin, Kanapatieff, Kharpakin, Trepakin, Plyeshakoff."

"Are they rich men?"

"No, father, not very rich. One of them owns twenty souls (serfs), another thirty; but there isn't one who owns a hundred."

Tchitchikoff perceived that he had arrived in a regular wilderness. "Tell me, at least, is it far to the town?"

"About sixty versts. How sorry I am that I have nothing to offer you to eat! But will you drink some tea, friend?"

"Thank you, my good woman, I only want a bed."

"In truth, rest is necessary after such a journey. Place yourself here, my friend, on this divan. Hey, there, Fetinya, fetch a feather-bed, some pillows, and a coverlet. What weather God has sent us! such thunder! My light has been burning all night before the holy pictures. Why! my father, your back and your side are all muddy, like a boar's! Where did you get so dirty?"

"Glory be to God, that I only soiled my clothes! I must return thanks for not having broken my ribs."

"Ye saints, how dreadful! Don't you want something to wipe your coat?"

"Thank you, thank you. Don't trouble yourself, but please give your maid orders to dry my clothes."

"Do you hear, Fetinya?" said the lady, turning to the same

woman, who had come out to the porch with a light. She had already succeeded in dragging in a feather-bed, and, after beating it up on both sides with her hands, she had sent a flood of feathers flying about the room. "Take the gentleman's caftan and his other clothes," resumed the lady, "first dry them before the fire, as you used to do for your dead master, and then brush and beat them thoroughly."

"I hear, *sudarinya!*"* said Fetinya, as she spread a sheet over the feather-bed and placed the pillows.

"Well, now your bed is ready," said the lady. "Farewell, my friend: I wish you a good-night. Do you need anything more? Perhaps, father, you are accustomed to have someone to tickle your heels at night. My late husband could never get to sleep without it."

But the guest declined to have his heels tickled. The lady took her departure; and Tchitchikoff immediately undressed, giving everything to Fetinya, who, after wishing him good-night in her turn, carried all the wet garments away. When he was left alone he glanced, not without satisfaction, at his couch, which reached almost to the ceiling. Fetinya was evidently an adept in the art of beating up a feather-bed. Then with the aid of a chair, he climbed into the bed, which so gave way beneath him that he sank almost to the floor, while the feathers which he pressed out at the seams flew all over the room. He blew out the candle, drew the calico coverlet over him, and at once fell asleep.

It was already quite late in the morning when he awoke on the following day. The sun was shining through the shutters straight into his eyes, and the flies were buzzing about. Casting a glance round the room he perceived that birds did not form the subjects of all the pictures: among them hung a portrait of Kutusoff, and an oil-painting of an old man in a uniform such as was worn under Pavel Petrovitch. The clock again hissed, and then struck ten: a feminine face peeped in at the door, and immediately disappeared again; for Tchitchikoff, during his sleep, had thrown off all the bedclothes. The face which had peeped in seemed familiar to him in some way. He endeavoured to recall who it belonged to, and finally remembered that it was the countenance of his hostess. He put on his shirt: his garments, all dried and brushed, lay beside him. When he was dressed he approached the window, and began to survey the view before him. The window overlooked a narrow yard which was filled with domestic fowl of every kind. The turkeys and hens were innumerable; among them stalked a cock with measured steps, shaking his comb, and turning his head on one side, as though he were listening to something. A sow and her litter were also there, poking their snouts into a heap of rubbish. The sow devoured a little chicken by the way, and then quietly

* Madam. The ordinary answer, corresponding to "Yes, madam."

continued to eat some water-melon rind. This small court, or chicken-yard, was surrounded by a fence, beyond which spread some broad vegetable gardens filled with onions, cabbages, potatoes, beet-roots, and other vegetables. There was also an orchard with apple and other fruit-trees, covered with nets, so as to protect them from magpies and sparrows: the latter were flitting in large parties from place to place. Several scare-crows with arms outstretched were elevated on long poles, and one of them wore the lady's own cap. Beyond the vegetable garden came some peasants' huts, which, although they were built at irregular intervals, and not arranged in street fashion, indicated that there were a number of inhabitants in the place. Tchitchikoff noted that they were all kept in repair as they should be: the worn-out boarding on the roofs had been replaced by new planks; none of the gates hung awry; moreover, in certain sheds turned towards him he observed some carts which were almost new. "Yes, her village is of a fair size," he said to himself, and he immediately resolved to become more closely acquainted with the lady. He glanced at the doorway through which she had popped her head, and, catching sight of her seated behind the tea-table, he went up to her with a cheerful engaging mien.

"Good-morning, my friend. How did you sleep?" said his hostess, rising from her place. She was better dressed than on the preceding evening, wearing a dark gown, and no longer sporting a nightcap; however, a wrapper was still wound about her throat.

"Well, very well," said Tchitchikoff, seating himself in an arm-chair. "And how did you sleep, my friend?"

"Badly, my friend."

"How so?"

"Sleeplessness. My hips ache, and my legs seem as if they would break just above my ankles."

"It will pass off, it will pass off, my dear woman. You mustn't pay any attention to it."

"God grant that it will pass off! I have rubbed myself with lard, and with turpentine also. But what will you take with your tea? There is some fruit-brandy in that flask."

"That's not bad, my dear woman—not bad at all. I will take some fruit-brandy."

Tchitchikoff had made up his mind not to stand on ceremony with this person, so taking his cup of tea in one hand, and pouring some fruit-brandy into it with the other, he resumed as follows:—

"You have a nice little village, my dear woman. How many souls are there?"

"Nearly eighty, my friend," said his hostess: "but unfortunately the times are bad; last year the crops were frightful! May the Lord preserve us from anything of the kind again."

"But there are some stout-looking moujiks here, and the

izbás are sound. Permit me to ask your family name. I was so upset—I arrived so late at night that—— "

"My name is Korobotchka. I am the widow of a collegiate secretary."

"I thank you humbly. And your other name?"

"Nastasya Petrovna."

"Nastasya Petrovna? That's a fine name, Nastasya Petrovna. I have an aunt, my mother's sister, who is named Nastasya Petrovna."

"And what is your name?" inquired the lady. "I think you must certainly be an assessor."

"No, my dear woman," replied Tchitchikoff, laughing, "I certainly am not an assessor: I am travelling on my own business."

"Ah! so you are a wholesale merchant. It really is a pity that I sold my honey to the dealers so cheap! You would probably have bought it of me, father."

"No, I should not have bought honey."

"What then? Hemp, perhaps? But very little hemp is spun in my house now,—half a pood* at most."

"No, my dear woman, I am thinking of a different sort of goods: tell me, have any of your peasants died?"

"Ah, yes, my friend, eighteen of them!" said the old woman with a sigh. "And they were such splendid fellows, all workmen. Some have been born since, it is true; but what of that? They are all small fry. And then the assessor comes: 'Pay for your souls,' says he. The people are dead, but until the next census you must still pay taxes on them as though they were living. And last week my smith was burnt to death—such a clever smith he was! and he knew the locksmith's business too."

"Have you had a fire here?"

"Oh, no! God preserve us from such a misfortune! he burnt himself up, my father. His inside got on fire in some way or other—through drinking too much. Blue flames came out of him, and he rotted and rotted away until he turned as black as coal. And he was such a skilful smith! At present I cannot drive out: there is no one to shoe the horses."

"All is according to the will of God, my dear woman," said Tchitchikoff, sighing. "Nothing can be said against the wisdom of God. Will you give them to me, Nastasya Petrovna?"

"Give you what, my friend?"

"Why, all the souls that have died."

"But how can I give them away?"

"It is simple enough. Or, if you prefer it, you can sell them. I will give you money for them."

"But how? I really don't catch your idea. You don't want to dig them up out of the ground, do you?"

Tchitchikoff perceived that the old woman was far from apprehending his meaning, and that it was indispensable for him to

* Twenty pounds' weight.

speak to her more plainly. So he explained to her in a few words that the transfer, or purchase, would have no significance except on paper, and that the dead souls would be inscribed as though they were living.

"But of what use can they be to you?" said the old woman, staring at him.

"That is my affair."

"But they are dead."

"Who says they are alive? My buying them is an advantage to you, since they are dead. You still have to pay for them, but I will release you from that trouble and taxation. Do you understand? And I will not only free you from that, but I will give you fifteen roubles to boot. Now is it clear?"

"Really, I don't know," exclaimed the lady, pausing. "I have never sold any dead people before."

"The idea! It would be far more wonderful if you ever *had* sold any to any one. Or is it that you think they could be turned to profit?"

"No, I do not think that. What profit could be derived from them? The only thing that troubles me is, that they are dead."

"Well, she's a hard-headed person," said Tchitchikoff to himself. "Listen, my good woman! Just think it over well: here you are ruining yourself with paying taxes on them as if they were living."

"Oh, my friend, don't speak of it!" interrupted the lady. "Only two weeks ago I paid a hundred and fifty roubles, besides making a present, to the assessor."

"Well, you see how it is, my dear woman? Now, only take into consideration the fact that you won't have to give any more presents, for now I shall pay for the dead serfs—I, and not you: I assume all responsibilities. I will even have the deed prepared at my expense—do you understand me?"

The old woman became thoughtful. She saw that the transaction really seemed to be a profitable one for herself, but it was too novel and untried; and so she began to feel very much afraid lest our friend should cheat her in this sale. He was a suspicious character, for he had arrived, God knows whence, and at night time too.

"Well, my dear woman, shall we strike the bargain?" asked Tchitchikoff.

"Really, my friend, I never sold any dead people before. I sold some live ones two years ago—two girls to the protopope for a hundred roubles each; and he was very glad and grateful: they turned out splendid workers: they even weave napkins."

"Well, but the question isn't one of living serfs—God be with them!—I ask for dead ones."

"Really, I am afraid lest it should occasion me a loss in some way. Perhaps you are deceiving me, my father; perhaps they—they are worth more."

"Listen, my good woman—what a woman you are! How can they be worth anything? They are dust. Do you understand? Simply dust. Take any useless, trivial thing, for example, even a simple rag—and the rag has a value; it can at least be sold for a paper-mill: but those dead serfs are good for nothing. Now, tell me yourself, what are they good for?"

"That is quite true. They are good for nothing at all, and only one thing deters me, that they are dead."

"Eh! what a blockhead she is!" said Tchitchikoff to himself, beginning to lose his patience. "Come, I must settle it with her! She has thrown me into a perspiration, the confounded old fool!" Here he drew a handkerchief from his pocket, wiped away the perspiration which had started out on his brow, and resolved to attack the old lady in a different style. "My dear woman," said he, "you either do not wish to understand my words, or else you say all that for the mere sake of saying something. I will give you money—fifteen roubles in bank-notes—do you understand? Money. You cannot pick money up in the street. Now, tell me how much did you sell your honey for?"

"For twelve roubles a pood."

"You are surely exaggerating a little, my good woman. You did not sell it for twelve?"

"By Heavens, I did."

"Now, come. So much as that—for honey? You had been collecting it for a year, perhaps, with a deal of care and labour; you worried about your bees and their comfort, and kept them all winter in the cellar; but the dead souls I speak of are not a matter of this world. In their case you have not been put to trouble and toil. It was God's will that they should quit this world, thereby diminishing your property. As regards the honey, you received twelve roubles for your labour and exertions; but as regards the souls you will obtain fifteen roubles gratuitously so to say; and not in silver, but in blue banknotes." After these powerful arguments, Tchitchikoff hardly entertained a doubt but what the old woman would surrender.

"Indeed!" she replied. "I am a widow, and so inexperienced in business! It will be better for me to wait a little while: perhaps some merchants may come, and I can find out about the prices."

"It's a shame to talk like that, my dear woman! it's simply a shame! Now, just consider what you are saying! Who will buy those dead serfs? Come, what use can be made of them?"

"Perhaps they may be needed some day on the estate," rejoined the old woman; and without concluding her speech, she opened her mouth, and stared at Tchitchikoff almost in terror, desirous of knowing what he would reply.

"Dead men, indeed, about the estate!" he exclaimed. "Eh! where did you get that idea? They might be used as scarecrows

in your kitchen-garden to frighten away the sparrows. That's what you mean, I suppose, eh?"

"May the powers of the cross be with us! what terrible things you say!" began the old woman, crossing herself.

"What else would you set them doing? And, moreover, the bones and the graves will all remain with you: the transfer will only be on paper. Now, what do you say to that? How is it to be? Give me an answer, at any rate!"

The old woman began to reflect again.

"What are you thinking of, Nastasya Petrovna?"

"In truth, I cannot decide what to do: it will be better for me to sell you my hemp."

"But what should I do with your hemp? I am talking to you of something entirely different, if you please; and yet you thrust your hemp on me! Hemp is hemp, and when I come again, I may take it. But not now. So, how is it to be, Nastasya Petrovna?"

"By Heavens! dead souls are such strange wares—I never heard the like before."

Here Tchitchikoff exceeded all the bounds of patience, dashed a chair on to the floor, and consigned the lady to the fiend.

She was extremely frightened. "Ah! don't mention him. God be with him!" she exclaimed, turning very pale. "Only two days ago, I dreamed of the Evil One all night. I had a fancy to tell my fortune with cards, after saying my prayers, and God evidently sent him as a punishment. I saw him in such terrible guise; his horns were longer than a bull's."

"I am surprised that you don't dream of fiends by the dozen," said our friend. "I made my proposition from motives of Christian philanthropy alone: I see a poor widow struggling along, suffering from want.—Well, go to destruction then, and perish with your whole village!"

"Ah! dear me—why do you try to quarrel?" said the old woman, looking at him in terror.

"There's no use in saying a word to you. Truly, now, you are exactly like the house-dog, who lies in the hay, and neither eats the hay himself nor permits anyone else to eat it. I should have liked to purchase various domestic products from you, for I sometimes take government contracts also."

Here he lied, merely in passing, and without any ultimate object, but with most unexpected success. The government contracts acted powerfully on Nastasya Petrovna: at all events, she said in an almost beseeching voice, "Why has your anger become so hot? If I had known, to begin with, that you were such a testy man, I should not have contradicted you at all."

"As if there were no cause for anger! The matter may not be worth an egg, and yet I am angry about it!"

"Well, as you please: I am ready to sell the souls for fifteen roubles in bank-notes. Only look here, my father, concerning

those contracts: if any rye or buckwheat flour is required, or groats, or meat, please don't forget me."

"No, my dear woman, I will not," he said; and at the same time he wiped away the perspiration, which was pouring down his face in three streams. He then questioned her as to whether she had not some confidential friends in the town, or some acquaintance, whom she could authorise to complete the deed of sale, and all that was necessary.

"Why, the son of the protopope, Father Kirill, serves in the courts," replied Mrs. Korobotchka, whereupon Tchitchikoff asked her to write the protopope's son a confidential letter; and, in order to prevent any unnecessary obstacles from arising, he even undertook to compose it himself.

"It would be a good thing," thought Mrs. Korobotchka to herself in the meanwhile, "if he would take my flour and cattle for the government. I must make him a present. There was some batter left over last night: I will go and tell Fetinya to bake some gribble-cakes (*blini*). It would be as well, too, to make him a sweet tart with eggs: I have some very fine eggs, and it will only require a short time."

The hostess then left the room, in order to put her idea into execution with regard to the tart, and probably intending to amplify it with other productions of domestic cooking and baking; while Tchitchikoff proceeded to the drawing-room, where he had passed the night, in order to get the necessary papers from his dressing-case. Here everything had long since been put in order: the luxurious feather-bed had been carried away and a dressing table stood before the divan. Placing his case upon it, he rested awhile; for he felt that he was as drenched with perspiration as though he had been in a river. Everything he had on, from his shirt to his stockings, was moist. "Ah, that confounded old woman has worn me out!" he said, after resting a while; and then he opened his dressing-case. He immediately set to work, drew out some paper, and mending a pen, began to write. At that moment his hostess entered.

"You have a pretty case there, my friend," said she, seating herself beside him. "You purchased it at Moscow, surely?"

"Yes," replied Tchitchikoff, continuing to write.

"I knew it: everything there is of good workmanship. Two years ago my sister brought me some warm shoes for the children from Moscow, and they are of such good material that the children are still wearing them to this hour. Ah, what a lot of stamped paper you have there!" she went on, peeping into the dressing-case. In fact, there was a good deal of stamped paper there. "If you would only give me a sheet of it," she added. "I need it so much: if a petition has to be sent to the court, I have nothing to write it on."

Tchitchikoff explained to her that the paper was not suited for the purpose she indicated: that it was intended for bills of sale

and not for petitions. However, at last, in order to quiet her, he gave her several sheets valued at a rouble each. Then having written the letter to the protopope's son, he gave it to her to sign, and asked for a brief list of the dead moujiks. It appeared that she kept no list, but she knew almost all of their names by heart. He made her dictate them to him on the spot. The family-names of some of the peasants, and still more their nicknames, surprised him; and each time he heard a strange one, he paused and looked up. A certain Petr Savelieff Neuvazhai-Koruito* struck him especially, and he could not refrain from saying, "That is very long." Another had the term *korovuii kirpitch*† coupled with his name, and one was simply called Wheel Ivan. When Tchitchikoff had finished writing, he sniffed the air a little, and inhaled the smell of something hot and buttery.

"I humbly beg of you to taste," said his hostess, whereupon he glanced round, and saw on the table some mushrooms, patties, butter-cakes, pancakes, griddle-cakes, and all sorts of tarts—tarts containing garlic, poppy-seeds, curds, fish, and what not.

"Here is a sweet pasty with eggs," said the hostess.

Tchitchikoff attacked the sweet pasty with eggs, and after eating nearly half of it, he praised it. In fact, the pasty was savoury in itself; and besides, after all his trouble and bartering with the old woman, he needed some substantial refreshment.

"Will you have some griddle-cakes?" asked his hostess.

In reply, Tchitchikoff rolled three cakes together, dipped them in some melted butter, put them into his mouth, and then wiped his lips and rubbed his hands on his napkin.

After repeating this three times, he requested his hostess to order his britchka to be prepared. Nastasya Petrovna immediately sent Fetinya with instructions to attend to this, and also to fetch some more hot griddle-cakes at the same time.

"Your griddle-cakes are very good, my dear woman," said Tchitchikoff, accepting the hot ones when they arrived.

"Yes, we do them fairly well here," said the hostess; "but it's a pity the crops are bad; the flour is not so good.—But why are you in such a hurry, my friend?" she added, perceiving that Tchitchikoff had his cap in his hand. "The britchka is not harnessed yet."

"It must be ready, my good woman, it must be ready. My man harnesses the horses quickly."

"Well, please don't forget about the contracts."

"I won't forget, I won't forget," said Tchitchikoff, as he went into the vestibule.

"And you won't buy any lard?" said his hostess, following him.

"Why not? I'll buy some, but later on."

"I shall have some at Christmas."

* Despise-the-Trough. † Cow-brick.

"I will buy it, I will buy it: I will buy everything you have, even your lard."

"Perhaps you would also like some chicken's feathers. I shall have some also at St. Philip's feast."

"Very good, very good," said Tchitchikoff.

"You see, my father, that your britchka is not yet ready," added his hostess, when they emerged from the porch.

"It will be ready sure enough. But tell me, how am I to get back to the high road?"

"How are you to get to it?" said his hostess. "Well it is hard to tell you; there are a number of turns, but I can send a little girl with you to guide you. You probably have room for her to sit on the box?"

"Of course."

"Then, I will send a little girl with you; she knows the road; only mind you do not carry her off! The traders have already carried off one of my girls."

Tchitchikoff assured her that he would not do so, and Mrs. Korobotchka, regaining her composure, then began to inspect everything in her yard; she glanced at the housekeeper, who was bringing some honey from the storehouse; at a moujik, who made his appearance at the gate; and gradually her mind, sorely confused by her chat with our hero, reverted to household matters.

"Ah! here is the britchka, here is the britchka!" exclaimed Tchitchikoff at last, catching sight of his approaching vehicle. "What have you been doing so long, you blockhead?" he added to Selifan. "It is evident you haven't entirely got rid of the fumes of your intoxication."

To this Selifan made no reply.

"Farewell, my dear woman!" added our hero. "Now, where is your girl?"

"Hey, Pelageya," said the hostess to a little girl of eleven, who was standing near the porch, in a gown of home-made linen stuff, with bare feet, which might have been taken at a distance for boots, so bedaubed they were with fresh mud. "Show this gentleman the road."

Selifan helped the child to climb on to the box, Tchitchikoff placed his foot on the step after her; and making the britchka tilt on one side, for he was rather heavy, he finally took his seat, saying, "Ah, now, that's well! Farewell, my good woman!" Then the horses started off.

Selifan growled all the way, but, at the same time, he was very attentive to his business, as was generally the case with him when he had been in fault, or intoxicated. The horses were wonderfully spruced up. The collar of one of them, which had hitherto been almost in a tattered state, was now skilfully mended. They went on till they reached a cross road, and here the coachman turned to the little girl seated on the box beside

him. Pointing with his whip to the cross road, which was black with the rain, and which ran between fresh, bright, green fields, he asked, "To the right, eh?"

"No, no: I will show you," replied the girl.

"Where now?" asked Selifan, when they had gone some distance farther, and had come to a fresh cross road.

"It's here," replied the little maid, pointing with her hand.

"Why, you child!" said Selifan. "That is to the right, as I said. She doesn't know the right from the left!" he added.

Although the day was very fine, the road was so miry that the wheels of the britchka caught up the mud, and soon became covered with it as with a coating of felt, which rendered the equipage considerably heavier. Moreover, the soil was clayey, and unusually adhesive. For these reasons they did not emerge from the byeways until mid-day. Without the aid of the little girl, it would have been difficult to accomplish even this; for the roads sprawled out in all directions, and Selifan would have covered a vast expanse of unnecessary ground, without any fault of his own. However, the little girl at last pointed to a black-looking building in the distance, and said, "There is the highway."

"And that building?" inquired Selifan.

"That's the tavern," said the child.

"All right, now we can get along by ourselves," rejoined Selifan: "run home."

He drew up, and helped her to descend, muttering between his teeth, "What a black-legged creature you are!"

Tchitchikoff gave her a copper groschen; and then she ran away home, quite content with her present and especially with having ridden on the carriage-box.

CHAPTER FOUR

NOZDREFF

On reaching the inn Tchitchikoff commanded a halt for two reasons: on the one hand, to give the horses an opportunity to rest, and, on the other, to get something to eat for himself.

The wooden inn, darkened with age, received Tchitchikoff beneath its narrow but hospitable verandah, supported on turned wooden columns, which resembled ancient ecclesiastical candlesticks. The inn was somewhat like an izbá (cabin), but of rather larger dimensions. The carving on the cornice round the windows and door gave it a tolerably artistic appearance, which was heightened by some jugs and flowers painted on the shutters.

Ascending the narrow wooden staircase which led up-stairs into a spacious vestibule, Tchitchikoff encountered a door which opened with a squeak, and beheld a fat old woman in a motley chintz gown, who addressed him with, "This way, if you please."

"Do you happen to have a roast sucking-pig?" Tchitchikoff asked in reply to her greeting.

"Yes."

"With horse-radish and sour cream?"

"Yes, with both."

"Fetch it here, then."

The old woman went to get it, and brought a plate, and a napkin which was starched to such a point that it stood on one end like a dry crust; then she brought a knife with a yellow bone handle and a blade as thin as a penknife, a two-pronged fork, and a salt-cellar which could not be induced to stand straight on the table.

Our hero, according to his custom, immediately entered into conversation with the landlady, and inquired whether she kept the inn herself, or whether there was a landlord, and how much money the inn brought in each year, and whether her sons lived with her, and whether the eldest one was married or unmarried, what sort of a wife he had, whether she had brought him a large dowry or not, and whether the bride's father was satisfied, or whether he had been angry at only receiving only a few presents at the wedding; in short, he omitted nothing. Of course it is understood that he inquired what landowners there were in the

icinity; and he found out that there were several, named Mokhin, Potchitaeff, Muilnoi, Tcheprakoff, and Sobakevitch. "Ah! do you know Sobakevitch?" he asked, and he immediately learnt that the old woman knew not only Sobakevitch, but Maniloff also. She declared, too, that Maniloff was *more exacting* than Sobakevitch: "He immediately orders a chicken to be boiled, asks for some veal," she said; "and if there is any roast mutton, he asks for that also—indeed he tries everything; but Sobakevitch only asks for one thing, eats it all up, and then wants a second help without extra charge."

While Tchitchikoff was thus conversing and eating the roast sucking-pig, the rumble of an approaching carriage became audible. Peeping through the window he perceived a light britchka, attached to a troika of three fine horses, halting before the door of the inn. Two men descended from the britchka. One of them was fair-haired and of lofty stature; the other somewhat shorter and of dark complexion. The fair man wore a dark-blue Hungarian coat, the dark one a simple striped summer jacket. In the distance an empty calash was coming along, drawn by four long-maned horses with frayed collars and some rope harness. The fair-haired man immediately walked up-stairs, while the dark one remained fumbling for something in the britchka, talking to the servant and pointing to the advancing calash. His voice struck Tchitchikoff as familiar to him in some way or other. While he was still gazing out of the window, the fair-haired man had succeeded in opening the door of the room. He was of lofty stature, with a thin, or what is called a worn face, and a reddish moustache. It might be surmised from his brown cheeks that he knew what smoke was, if not the smoke of powder, at least that from tobacco. He bowed courteously to Tchitchikoff, and the latter responded in the same way. Then the dark-complexioned man entered, flinging his cap from his head upon the table, and jauntily passing his fingers through his thick black hair. He was a well-built young man of medium height, with full red cheeks, teeth as white as snow, and whiskers as black as pitch. He looked as fresh as blood and milk; his face was radiant with health.

"Bah, bah, bah!" he exclaimed all at once, flinging both arms about as he caught sight of Tchitchikoff. "How did you come here?"

Tchitchikoff now recognised Nozdreff, the same person in whose company he had dined at the procurator's, and who, in the course of a very few minutes, had got upon a very intimate footing with him.

"Where have you been?" resumed Nozdreff; and without awaiting a reply, he went on. "For myself I have been to the fair, my dear fellow. And now congratulate me! I'm totally ruined! Would you believe it? I was never so completely plucked in all my life! Why, I am travelling with peasants'

horses! Just look out of the window!" Hereupon he bent Tchitchikoff's head so that it almost came in violent contact with the window sash. "Do you see what wretched beasts they are?" he continued. "It was with difficulty that they dragged me along, the cursed animals! I had to get into his britchka." So saying, Nozdreff pointed to his comrade. "By the way, you are not already acquainted? This is my brother-in-law, Mizhueff. We were talking about you this morning. 'See, now,' said I, 'we must find Tchitchikoff!' But oh! my friend, if you only knew how completely ruined I am! Will you believe it? I not only lost four trotters, but everything else besides! Why, I haven't either a watch or a chain about me!"

Tchitchikoff now looked at Nozdreff, and perceived that he had neither watch nor chain. It even struck him that one of his whiskers was smaller and thinner than the other.

"If I only had had twenty roubles in my pocket," continued Nozdreff, "only just twenty, I could have won everything back; that is to say, I could have won that and thirty thousand roubles besides, and have immediately put them into this pocket-book, like an honourable man."

"But that was what you said at the time," replied the fair-haired man; "and when I gave you fifty roubles, you lost them too."

"I did not mean to lose them; by heavens, I didn't mean to! If I had not committed a mistake I should not have lost them. If I hadn't staked three to two on that cursed seven after the king, I might have broken the bank."

"But you didn't break it," said the fair-haired man.

"I did not break it because I played too soon. But do you think that your major plays well?"

"Whether he plays well or not, he outplayed you."

"Much that amounts to!" said Nozdreff. "I'll win some cash from him in the same way. Yes, just let him play with me again, then we'll see, we'll see what sort of a player he is. Ah! how jolly we were in town, friend Tchitchikoff! Really, the fair was capital. The merchants themselves declared that there never was such a concourse of people. Everything which I had brought up from the country sold at the most favourable prices. Ah, my friend, what a carouse we had! Even now when I think of it—deuce take it—that is, it is such a pity you were not there. Just imagine, a regiment of dragoons was stationed at three versts from the town. Every one of the officers—and there were forty of them—came to town; and then we began to drink, brother, with the staff cavalry captain, Potzyelueff, such a splendid fellow he is! such a moustache he has, brother! He calls Bordeaux 'burdashki.' 'Bring some burdashki, my good fellow,' says he. Then Lieutenant Kuvshinnikoff—ah, my friend, what a charming man he is! And I may say that the carouse was managed according to rule. We were all together, and what wine Ponomareff gave us! He is a rascal

though, and you mustn't purchase anything in his shop: he mixes all sorts of rubbish in his wine—sandal-wood, burnt cork, and he even colours it with elderberry, the villain; but after all if he brings a little bottle from the cellar which he calls his own sanctum, then truly, my friend, you find yourself in the empyrean. Our champagne was so good that the governor's is nothing to it, simply kvas.* Fancy, not only real Cliquot, but a special sort of Cliquot—double-distilled Cliquot. And then I got one little bottle of a French wine called 'Bonbon,' with a perfume. Ah! roses and everything you like. But what a carouse we did have! After us came some prince or other, and he sent to the shop for champagne; but no, there wasn't a single bottle left in the whole city, the officers had drunk it all up. Just think, I alone drank seventeen bottles in the course of the dinner."

"Come, now, you can't drink seventeen bottles," remarked the fair-haired man.

"On the word of an honest man, I say that I did drink them," replied Nozdreff.

"You can say what you like, but I assert that you cannot drink ten."

"Come, will you bet that I can't drink them?"

"What's the use of betting?"

"Come, now, wager that gun which you bought in town."

"No, I won't."

"Come, wager it, try it."

"I don't want to try it."

"Yes, you would be left without a gun as you are left without a hat. Ah, friend Tchitchikoff, how sorry I am that you were not there. I know that you could not have parted from Kuvshinnikoff. How well you would have agreed with each other! He's not at all like the procurator and all those government misers who tremble over every copeck. He can play at *galbik*, faro, or anything you wish. Ah, Tchitchikoff! Now, what would it have cost you to come? Truly, you are a dirty pig for not coming, a thorough lout. Kiss me, my soul; death, but I love you! Look, Mizhueff! fate has brought us together. Now, what is he to me, or what am I to him? He has come here, God knows whence, and we also have come here. But, I say, how many carriages there were, my friend, at the fair, and all on such a grand scale! I tried my luck at the wheel of fortune, and won two boxes of pomatum, a porcelain cup, and a guitar: then I staked once more, and gave the thing a twist, and lost more than six roubles, dash it! But I say, if you only knew what a wild fellow Kuvshinnikoff is! We went to nearly all the balls together. There was such a woman at one of them, with hardly anything on her back. She was nearly naked, and I thought to myself, 'Devil take it!' But Kuvshinnikoff

* A sourish liquor made from rye-meal and malt.

—he's such a brute!—he just seated himself beside her, and paid her such compliments in French. I assure you, he didn't miss flirting with any of the women. That's what he calls 'making the most of the strawberries.' By the way one dealer at the fair sold such wonderful fish and slices of dried sturgeon. I have brought some with me—lucky I thought of buying them while I still had some money left. But, I say, where are you going now?"

"To see a man I have to deal with," said Tchitchikoff.

"Oh, dash the man! let him alone; come to my house."

"Impossible, impossible! I have some business to transact with him."

"Well, that's a nice story to invent. Ah, you Opodeldok Ivanovitch, you're deceiving us!"

"Really, I have some business to attend to, and very important business too."

"I'll bet that you are lying! Come, tell me to whose house you are going."

"Well, then, to Sobakevitch's."

On hearing this Nozdreff burst into such a resounding laugh as only a fresh, healthy man can give vent to, displaying all his sugar-white teeth, and his cheeks quivering and leaping. A traveller in an adjoining room who was abruptly roused from his slumbers, stared round, wondering what was happening, and finally ejaculated:

"Eh, what! has the house tumbled down?"

"What is there ridiculous in what I said?" said Tchitchikoff, somewhat offended by Nozdreff's laugh.

But Nozdreff continued laughing at the top of his voice, and even shouted at intervals. "Oh, mercy! I shall burst."

"But there's nothing to laugh at. I promised Sobakevitch to go and see him," said Tchitchikoff.

"You'll be sorry when you reach his house, he's a downright niggard! Ah! I know your character; you'll be mightily disappointed if you think you'll find a faro bank and a good bottle of 'bonbon' there. Listen, my dear fellow; let Sobakevitch go to the devil, and come with me. What dried sturgeon I'll treat you to! Ponomareff bowed to me when I bought it and said, 'It's only for you; you may search through the whole fair, and you won't find any such dried sturgeon.' But he's a frightful scamp, and I said so to his face. 'You,' said I, 'and our brandy farmers are the biggest rascals we have.' The beast laughed, and stroked his beard. Kuvshinnikoff and I breakfasted at his place every day. Ah, my dear fellow, I forgot to tell you. But I've got something which I wouldn't sell for ten thousand roubles. Hey, there, Porfiriy!" he shouted to his man, who was holding in one hand a knife, and in the other a crust of bread with a bit of sturgeon, which he had succeeded in slicing off on the sly. "Hey, there, Porfiriy!" shouted

Nozdreff, " bring that puppy here. Such a dog ! " he continued, turning to Tchitchikoff. " I didn't buy it, I stole it ; the owner wouldn't give it up of his own free will. I offered him a chestnut horse : you remember it—the one I won from Khvostuireff ? "

As it happened, Tchitchikoff had never seen either the chestnut horse nor Khvostuireff in his life.

" Won't you have something to eat, master, now ? " said the old woman, approaching Nozdreff.

" No, nothing. Ah, my dear Tchitchikoff, how we did carouse ! However, woman, give me a glass of vodka [spirits]. What kind have you got ? "

" Aniseed," replied the old woman.

" Well, fetch your aniseed," said Nozdreff.

" Give me a glass too," said the fair-haired man.

" There was an actress at the theatre who sang like a canary," now resumed Nozdreff. " Kuvshinnikoff, who sat beside me, said, ' There, my dear fellow, we must make the most of the strawberries with her.' I think there were at least fifty booths at the fair. A fellow named Fenardi turned somersets for four hours." Here he took a glass of aniseed from the old woman, who made a low reverence to him. " Bring it here ! " he next cried, catching sight of Porfiriy entering with the puppy.

Porfiriy was dressed like his master, in a dirty wadded arkhaluk.* He set the puppy on the floor ; the animal stretched itself out, and then began to sniff and smell.

" There's a pup," said Nozdreff, grasping it by the back, and lifting it up, whereupon it emitted a very pitiful howl. " But you haven't done as I told you," resumed Nozdreff, turning to Porfiriy, and examining the dog's belly attentively. " You have not combed him."

" Yes, I did comb him."

" Then where have all those fleas come from ? "

" I can't tell. Perhaps they crawled on to him from the britchka."

" You lie ! you lie ! and you never meant to comb him. I believe, you fool, that you have given him some of your own fleas. Look here, Tchitchikoff, look what ears he has ! just feel them with your hand."

" Oh, I can see them ; he's of a good breed," replied Tchitchikoff.

" No, but take hold of him ; feel his ears."

Tchitchikoff, to please Nozdreff, felt the animal's ears, and then remarked, " Yes, he will be a good dog."

" And do you feel how cold his nose is ? Take it in your hand."

Not wishing to offend him, Tchitchikoff touched the dog's snout also, saying, " Good scent."

" A genuine bull-dog," went on Nozdreff. " I confess that I had for a long time been whetting my teeth for a bull-dog. Here, Porfiriy, take him away."

* A long, straight coat reaching to the knees.

Porfiriy took hold of the dog, and carried him off to the britchka.

"Listen, Tchitchikoff," continued Nozdreff, "you certainly must come to my house; it's only five versts away; we shall be there in no time, and then you can go to Sobakevitch's, if you like."

"Why not?" said Tchitchikoff to himself. "I will go to Nozdreff's, after all. He isn't any worse than the others. He's like everybody else; and, besides, he's just been losing money. He has plenty of everything, evidently; and I might ask him to give me something without payment." "I'll go, if you like," he now added aloud; "but don't detain me long; time is of value to me just now."

"Ah! that's right! that's good! Wait, I'll kiss you for that." Here Nozdreff and Tchitchikoff embraced each other. "That's glorious!" added the former; "we'll all three ride together."

"No, you must let me leave you," said the fair-haired man. "I must go home."

"Nonsense, nonsense, my dear fellow! I won't let you go."

"But really, my wife will be angry; you can get into the other britchka now."

"Ni, ni, ni, don't think of it."

The fair-haired man was one of those individuals who, at first sight, seem to have a stubborn character. Before you have succeeded in opening your mouth they are ready to dispute, and it seems as if they would never agree with anyone. However, it always ends by their betraying some weakness, and consenting to the very thing they had opposed.

"Nonsense!" said Nozdreff, in answer to some objection made by his brother-in-law. Then he set the latter's cap on his head, and the fair-haired fellow followed his companions.

"You haven't paid for your aniseed, master," now said the landlady.

"Oh, very well, very well, my good woman! I say, brother-in-law, pay, if you please. I haven't a copeck left in my pocket."

"How much do you want?" asked his brother-in-law.

"Why, twenty copecks in all," said the old woman.

"She's mad! Give her ten; that's more than enough."

"It's but little, master," said the old woman. However, she took the money gratefully, and hastily went to open the door for them. She had lost nothing, as she had asked four times the worth of the vodka.

The travellers took their seats. Tchitchikoff's britchka drove alongside the one in which Nozdreff and his brother-in-law sat, and thus they could all three of them converse freely on the way. Behind them followed Nozdreff's little calash, which was always dropping in the rear, with its bony peasants' horses. In this vehicle rode Porfiriy and the puppy.

While the travellers are journeying on, suppose we say something about Nozdreff, who may, perhaps, play a not unimportant part in our drama.

Nozdreff's person is probably already somewhat known to the reader. It has fallen to the lot of everyone to meet a few men like him. They are called lively young fellows, even in childhood, and at school they have the reputation of being good comrades. A certain amount of frankness, straightforwardness, and boldness are visible on their countenances. They make acquaintances quickly, and before you have time to look about you they call you "thou." They apparently strike up a friendship for ever; but it almost always happens that the person whose friendship they wish to cultivate quarrels with them that same evening over a friendly drinking-bout. Nozdreff, at thirty-five, was precisely the same as he had been at eighteen and twenty years of age—a great lover of carousing. Marriage had effected no change in him, especially as his wife had soon departed to the other world, leaving him two small children who were decidedly in his way, although a very pretty nurse looked after them. He never could stay at home more than a day at a time. His sensitive nose scented out a fair with all sorts of assemblies and balls at a distance of ten versts away. In the twinkling of an eye he was there, disputing and raising a tumult at the card tables, for, like all men of his description, he had a passion for cards. He did not play in quite an irreproachable style or quite honestly, as we have seen in the first chapter, for he knew several ways of turning up false cards, and other things besides, so that the game very frequently ended by his coming to grief; he was either kicked out, or else he returned home with only one whisker left him, and that rather scanty. However, his full, healthy cheeks were so well provided with vegetative force that his whiskers soon grew afresh, and even stronger than before. And what was strangest of all—the thing can only happen in Russia—was that after a time he again met the friends who had pummelled him, and met them as though nothing had taken place. And he was not the worse for it, as the saying goes, nor they either.

When Nozdreff was in society he would either drink himself full in such a manner that he could only laugh, or else he would lie and lie in the most terrible way. Indeed he lied absolutely without any need to do so; all of a sudden he would tell a story about some horse he had owned with a blue or pink mane, and such-like nonsense, so that his hearers finally walked off in mingled amazement and disgust.

While we have been describing Nozdreff the three equipages have driven up to the porch of his house. In the house no preparations had been made for their reception. In the middle of the dining-room stood two wooden trestles, and mounted upon them were two moujiks whitening the walls, and droning out an interminable song, while the floor was all bespattered with whitewash. Nozdreff at once ordered the moujiks and the trestles off, and ran out into an adjoining room to give his orders. His guests heard him giving the cook directions about dinner,

and on reflection, Tchitchikoff, who already began to feel some appetite, realised that they would not sit down to table before five o'clock. When Nozdreff returned he took his guests to inspect his village; and in a little over two hours he had shown them absolutely everything worthy of exhibition. First of all they went to inspect the stables, where they saw two mares—one a dapple-grey and the other a chestnut—and then a brown stallion, not very handsome to look at, but for which Nozdreff swore that he had paid ten thousand roubles.

"Oh! no, you did not give ten thousand for him surely," remarked his brother-in-law. "He isn't worth even one."

"By heavens, I did give ten thousand!" said Nozdreff.

"You may swear as much as you like," replied his brother-in-law.

"Well, if you like, we will have a bet about it," said Nozdreff. But his brother-in-law would not bet. Then Nozdreff showed them an empty stall, where some valuable horses had formerly stood; and in this same stable they also saw a goat, an animal which, according to an ancient superstition, is considered an indispensable adjunct in any place where horses are kept. This one seemed to be on good terms with the steeds, and walked about beneath their bellies as if quite at home. Then Nozdreff led his friends to view a young wolf, which was tied up.

"Here's a little wolf," said he. "I have him fed on raw meat, expressly. I want him to be a perfect wild beast."

Next they went to look at the pond, which according to Nozdreff's statements, contained fish of such a size that two men could with difficulty draw one of them to the shore—a statement which his relative did not fail to cast a doubt upon.

"Now I'll show you the most splendid pair of dogs in the world, Tchitchikoff," said Nozdreff. "The firmness of their flesh will arouse your admiration, and their scent—it's wonderfully keen." Thereupon he led them to a very prettily built little house, surrounded by a large yard, enclosed on all sides. As they entered the yard they saw all kinds of dogs, both long and short-haired, and of every possible hue and colour—dark brown, black with brown streaks, brown-spotted, red-spotted, black-eared, grey-eared, etc. Nozdreff was perfectly at home among all these animals, like a father in the midst of his family. They all instantly elevated their tails, wagged them according to canine laws, flew straight to meet the visitors, and began to greet them. About ten of them placed their paws on Nozdreff's shoulders, another one manifested the same friendship for Tchitchikoff, and, rising on his hind legs licked his lips, so that our hero immediately began to spit. The three men duly examined the two dogs, which inspired admiration by the firmness of their flesh—indeed they were fine animals—and then they went to see a Crimean bitch, who was already blind and would die soon, so Nozdreff declared, though she had been a splendid creature only two years before.

They looked at the bitch and found that she really was blind. Then they went to see the mill, overlooking a little stream. "And now we must visit the blacksmith," said Nozdreff. And after walking a little further they came upon the smithy.

"Here, in this field," said Nozdreff, pointing to a meadow near the blacksmith's shop, "there's such a pest of hares, that you can't see the ground for them at times. The other day I caught one of them by the hind-legs with my own hand."

"Come now, you can't catch a hare with your hand," remarked his brother-in-law.

"But I did, I actually did catch one!" replied Nozdreff. "Now I will take you to show you where my land ends," he resumed, turning to Tchitchikoff.

Nozdreff led his guests through a field full of briars and stones and little mounds. The guests were obliged to make their way over the clods recently turned by the plough. Tchitchikoff began to feel tired. In many places water burst forth beneath their feet, the district lay so low. At first they took pains in walking and set their feet cautiously; but perceiving at last that this was of no avail, they went straight on, without trying to escape the mud. After proceeding a considerable distance, they at last beheld the boundary, which consisted of a wooden post and a narrow ditch. "Here's the boundary-line," said Nozdreff; "all that you behold on this side is mine, including all the forest which looks so blue in that direction, and everything that is behind the forest—yes, all that is mine!"

"When did the forest come into your possession?" inquired his brother-in-law. "Have you purchased it recently? It never used to belong to you."

"Yes, I bought it a little while ago," replied Nozdreff.

"How did you manage to buy it so quickly?"

"How? Why, I bought it on the day before yesterday, and I paid a high price for it: devil take it!"

"But you were at the fair then!"

"What a fellow you are, Sofron! Can't a man be at a fair and buy some land as well? Well, yes, I was at the fair, but my steward bought it in my absence."

"Yes, the steward might have done it," said his brother-in-law; but he still had his doubts and shook his head.

The visitors returned to the house by the same abominable route. Nozdreff conducted them to his study, in which, however, no trace of those things which are usually to be seen in a study, namely, books and papers, was perceptible; the only noteworthy articles there were a sword and two guns, which were hanging on the wall, one of the firearms, according to their owner, being worth three hundred, and the other eight hundred, roubles. His brother-in-law, after surveying the apartment, merely shook his head. Then they were shown some Turkish daggers, on one of which was engraved the name "*Savelli Sibiryakoff, maker.*"

And then a hand-organ was produced, and Nozdreff immediately ground out something. This hand-organ played not unpleasantly; but in the middle of the tunes some catastrophe seemed to take place, for a mazurka suddenly ended in the song, "Malbrook's going to the war"; and the latter, in its turn, unexpectedly developed into a well-known waltz of ancient date. Long after the player had ceased to turn the crank, one pipe in the organ, a very audacious one, would not quiet down, but went on whistling. Then Nozdreff exhibited his pipes of wood, clay, and meerschaum, coloured and uncoloured, some of them enveloped in chamois-skin; also a tchibouk with an amber mouthpiece, which he had won at play not long before; and a tobacco-pouch, embroidered by some countess or other, who had fallen head over heels in love with him at some posting station, and whose little hands, as he expressed it, were the most subtle superfluities in the world. By this word superfluities, he probably intended to designate the highest pitch of perfection.

After nibbling a little smoked sturgeon, they seated themselves at table at about five o'clock. It was evident that with Nozdreff dinner did not constitute the principal feature in life; the dishes did not play a very great part in it: some of the food was burned to cinders and part of it was not cooked at all. It was plain, too, that the cook was chiefly guided by inspiration, and dashed in the first thing which came to hand: if the pepper stood near him, he sprinkled in pepper; if cabbage came in his way, he used cabbage; and added milk, ham, peas—in short everything, slap-dash fashion. So long as it was hot, some flavour would surely be the result. At dinner, Nozdreff directed attention to the wine; even before the soup was served he poured out a large glass of port for each of his guests, and another of Haut Sauterne; for in the Russian provinces there is no such thing as plain Sauterne.

Then Nozdreff ordered a bottle of Madeira to be brought; "and better," said he, "no field-marshal ever drank." The Madeira actually scorched their mouths; for the dealers being well acquainted with the tastes of the provincial landed gentry, had touched it up with rum, and added nitro-muriatic acid, in the hope that the drinker's stomach would bear it all. Then Nozdreff ordered a bottle of sparkling Burgundy to be brought, and filled the glasses with great diligence, right and left—Tchitchikoff's and his brother-in-law's; but Tchitchikoff observed, by the way, that he did not pour much into his own. This made him cautious; and as soon as Nozdreff began to talk or to pour out some more liquor for his brother-in-law, he promptly emptied his own glass on his plate. Before long some cherry-brandy was brought on, which had, so Nozdreff declared, exactly the same flavour as cream, but in which, to Tchitchikoff's amazement, common raw brandy was quite perceptible. Next they drank some sort of balsam, which bore a name difficult to recall;

ndeed the host himself gave it a different title when he mentioned for the second time.

The dinner had long been finished, and all the wines had been tried, but the guests still lingered at the table. Tchitchikoff was unwilling to approach Nozdreff on the matter of most nportance to himself in the presence of the brother-in-law. The subject was one that demanded solitude and a friendly iscussion. However, after all the brother-in-law could hardly e a dangerous person, for he appeared to be pretty thoroughly ntoxicated, and as he sat there he kept pecking at the table vith his nose. Becoming conscious all at once that he was not n a very nice condition, he made a suggestion that he had better tart for home, but he did so in as languid and feeble a voice as if, to se the Russian expression, he were bridling a horse with pincers.

"No, no, ni, ni! I won't let you go!" said Nozdreff.

"Oh, don't detain me, my friend; I really must go," said ne brother-in-law. "You ought not to detain me."

"Nonsense, nonsense! we'll set up a bank in a minute."

"No; set it up yourself, brother, but I can't. My wife will e in a great rage, she will indeed. I shall have to tell her all bout the fair. I must, brother—I really must go at once. No, on't detain me."

"Well! let your wife go to——. A mighty important matter ou have to discuss with her!"

"No, brother; but she is so worthy of esteem, and so true! he renders me such services that, will you believe it? the ears come into my eyes at thought of her. No, don't keep me ere; as I am an honest man I must leave."

"Let him go; of what use is he?" said Tchitchikoff softly to Nozdreff.

"Well, that's true," said Nozdreff. "I hate such people ke death itself!" and he added aloud, "Well, the Devil be vith you! go and dally with your wife, *fetiuk*."*

"No, brother, don't call me *fetiuk*," retorted his brother-in-aw. "I am indebted to her for my life. She really is so good nd sweet, and she caresses me so—it moves me to tears. If he asks me what I have seen at the fair, I shall have to tell her ll about it—she really is so charming."

"Well, go and tell her a pack of lies! There's your cap."

"No, brother, it is not at all proper for you to express yourself bout her in that manner; it is the same thing as insulting me, may say—she is so lovely."

"Well, then, take yourself off to her as quickly as possible."

"Yes, brother, I am going. Excuse me for not staying; I hould be heartily glad to do so, but I cannot." And the brother-n-law continued to repeat his apologies for a long while without erceiving that he had already been seated for some time in his ritchka, that he passed through the gates, and that the open

* An insulting name.

fields alone were spread around him. We may safely conclude from his condition that his wife did not learn many particulars with regard to the fair.

"What a fool!" said Nozdreff, as he stood at the window and watched the retreating carriage. "How he goes along! That little side-horse isn't a bad one, though; I have long wanted to get my hands on him. But there's nothing to be done with my brother-in-law; he's a *fetiuk*, just simply a *fetiuk!*"

After this they went back to the sitting-room. Porfiriy brought in lights, and Tchitchikoff observed that his host held a pack of cards which had most mysteriously made their way into his hands.

"Well, my dear fellow!" said Nozdreff, pressing the cards with his fingers, "come, just to while away the time, I'll hold a three-hundred-rouble bank."

But Tchitchikoff pretended not to have heard this remark, for as though an important matter had suddenly occurred to his memory, he said, "Ah! lest I should forget it, I have a favour to ask of you."

"What is it?"

"First, give me your word that you will grant it."

"But what is the favour?"

"Come, give me your word."

"Very well."

"Your word of honour?"

"My word of honour."

"Then here is my request: You surely have several dead serfs whose names are not yet struck out of the census returns?"

"Well, yes. What of that?"

"Well, make them over to me, in my name."

"What do you want with them?"

"Well, I need them."

"But what for?"

"Well they are—but that's my business; in short, I want them."

"Come, you certainly have invented some scheme or other. What is it? Tell me!"

"Invented what scheme? What do you mean? It's impossible to make anything out of such nonsense."

"But what can you want with them?"

"Oh, what a curious fellow you are; you want to feel everything with your hand, and even to smell it!"

"But why won't you say what they are for? Look here; as long as you won't tell me, I won't do what you want."

"But what good will it do you to know? Well, it's simply this—the fancy struck me. But, look here, it is not honourable on your part; you gave me your word, you know, and now you take it back."

"Well, as you like; but I won't make the dead serfs over to you until you tell me what you want them for."

"What can I say to him?" wondered Tchitchikoff; and, after moment's reflection, he declared that he needed the dead ouls in order to obtain weight in society: that his landed roperty was not large, so that, until it became more extensive, e should like to have a few dead souls.

"You lie! you lie!" said Nozdreff, without permitting him o finish. "You are lying, my good fellow!"

Tchitchikoff himself perceived that his story was not a very kilful one, and that his excuse was lame.

"Well, then, I will tell you plainly," he said, recovering imself, "only please do not tell any one. I am thinking of narrying; but you must know that the bride's father and mother 're very ambitious people. It's a nice affair, truly; I'm sorry I ntered into it. They imperatively require the bridegroom to wn not less than three hundred souls, and as I have only a undred and fifty peasants, that's not enough——"

"Come, you're lying, lying!" shouted Nozdreff again.

"No, no!" said Tchitchikoff, "I haven't lied even so much s that"; and, with his thumb, he pointed out the smallest oint on his little finger.

"I'll stake my head that you are lying," retorted Nozdreff.

"But this is an insult! Why do you declare like that that am lying?"

"Come, now, I certainly know you; you are a great rascal—llow me to tell you so in a friendly way. If I were your superior fficer, I would have you hanged on the first tree."

Tchitchikoff took offence at this remark. Any expression hat was in any wise coarse or contrary to decorum proved istasteful to him. In fact he did not even like to be treated vith familiarity under any circumstances, unless it were by a very xalted personage indeed. So he was now thoroughly offended.

"I'd hang you, by heavens I would!" repeated Nozdreff. I say this to you frankly, not for the purpose of insulting you, ut simply as a friend."

"There are limits to everything," said Tchitchikoff with a how of dignity. "If you wish to make such speeches as those, ake yourself off to some barracks." And then he added, "If ou will not give me your dead serfs, then sell them to me."

"Sell them! Come, I know you; you are a scamp, and you on't give much for them!"

"Eh! but you are a strange fellow too! Look here; do ou prize those dead serfs very highly? Do you value them ke diamonds?"

"Well, yes, I do."

"As you please. What Jewish instincts you have, my dear ellow! You simply ought to give them to me."

"Come, now, just to prove that I am not a niggard, I won't ake anything for them. But buy my stallion, and I will give hem to you as a bonus."

"But, pray, what do I want with your stallion?" said Tchitchikoff, who was really astounded by this proposition.

"What? Why, I paid ten thousand roubles for him, and I will sell him to you for four."

"But of what use is a stallion to me? I don't keep a stud."

"But, listen; you don't understand me. I will only take three thousand roubles from you now, and the other thousand you can pay later on."

"But I have no use for the stallion, God be with him!"

"Come, then, buy my chestnut mare."

"I don't need the mare either."

"I will only ask you two thousand roubles for the mare and the grey horse which you saw in my stable."

"But I don't want the horses."

"You can sell them; you will get twice as much for them at the nearest fair."

"All the more reason why you should sell them yourself, if you are sure you could make twice as much."

"I know I should; but I want you to have some profit."

Tchitchikoff returned thanks for Nozdreff's friendly intentions, and flatly declined to purchase either the grey horse or the chestnut mare.

"Well, then, buy a dog. I'll sell you such a couple that on seeing them cold chills will run over your skin! *Brudastayas** with whiskers; their hair stands up like bristles; the curves of their loins are something inconceivable, and their paws are round like balls."

"And what have I to do with dogs; I am not a sportsman."

"But I want you to have some dogs. Listen: if you won't take a dog, buy my hand-organ. It's a wonderful hand-organ! As I am an honest man, it cost me fifteen hundred roubles. I will let you have it for nine hundred."

"And why should I buy a hand-organ? I am not a German, to drag it along the road and beg for money."

"But this is not the sort of hand-organ that the Germans use. It's a valuable instrument; examine it closely; it's all of mahogany. Here, I'll show it to you once more." Here Nozdreff, seizing Tchitchikoff by the hand, began to drag him into another room; and although our hero stamped his feet and protested that he already knew all about the hand-organ, he was forced to listen once more to the tune describing the manner in which "Malbrook" (Marlborough) went to the war.

"If you won't give me any money, then, this is what I will do. Listen! I will let you have the hand-organ and all the dead souls I have, and you shall give me your britchka and three hundred roubles bonus."

"Come, that's an idea! And what am I to travel in?"

"I will give you another britchka. Come, let's go to the

* A very ugly sort of hunting-dog.

carriage-house, and I will show it to you. You need only have t painted over, and it will be a wonder of a britchka."

"Why, some devil has deprived this fellow of his senses!" said Tchitchikoff to himself; and he resolved, at any cost, to get rid of all britchkas, hand-organs, and dogs with inconceivable cask-shaped ribs and ball-shaped paws.

"Then it's to be the britchka, the hand-organ, and the dead souls all together."

"No; I won't have them!" said Tchitchikoff once more.

"Why won't you?"

"Simply because I won't; and that's enough."

"Well, what a fellow you are, to be sure! I see that it is impossible to get on with you like a good friend and comrade —that's a fact! It is evident that you are a double-faced man."

"So I'm a knave, am I? Well, judge for yourself: why should I acquire a thing which is absolutely useless to me?"

"Well, please don't mention it. I know you very well, now. A thorough knave, truly! Now, listen; if you like, we'll have a faro bank. I will stake all the dead souls on one card, and the hand-organ to boot."

"Well, settling it by gambling means subjecting one's self to uncertainty," said Tchitchikoff; and meantime he cast a glance at the cards in Nozdreff's hands. By the appearance of the back it struck him that these must be prepared cards—even the gilding on the edges seemed suspicious to him.

"Why to uncertainty?" said Nozdreff. "There is no uncertainty about it; if luck is only on your side, you can win a devil of a lot! There it is! Eh, what luck!" he said, beginning to deal for the sake of arousing his guest's appetite; "what luck, what luck! Look here, and here! Here's that confounded card upon which I staked everything! I felt that it would give me over to the Evil One: and I shut my eyes, and said to myself, 'Devil take you; you will betray me, you cursed thing!'"

While Nozdreff was saying this, Porfiriy brought in a bottle of wine. But Tchitchikoff positively declined either to play or to drink.

"Why won't you play?" asked Nozdreff.

"Well, because I am not so disposed. To tell the truth, I am not at all fond of gambling."

"Why not?"

Tchitchikoff shrugged his shoulders and retorted, "Because I am not."

"You're a fool, then!"

"I can't help it. God made me so."

"You're simply a *fetiuk!* I used to think you a decent sort of a man; but you don't understand good manners at all. It's impossible to talk with you as with a friend: there's no uprightness or sincerity about you! You're a perfect Sobakevitch—just such another rascal!"

"Why are you insulting me? Am I to blame because I don't gamble? Sell me your dead souls and let us have an end of all this nonsense."

"May the bald devil get you! I did mean to give them to you for nothing, but now you won't get them at all! I wouldn't sell them even if you were to give me three empires. Such a deceiver, such a detestable miser you are! I will have nothing to do with you from this time forth. Go, Porfiriy, tell the ostler not to give any oats to this man's horses; let them eat hay instead."

Tchitchikoff was not in the least prepared for this last decree.

"It would have been better if you had never presented yourself before my eyes at all!" exclaimed Nozdreff.

Despite this quarrel, the host and his guest supped together; but on this occasion no wines with seductive names appeared upon the table. A single bottle of Cyprus reared its head: it was of the sort known as sour (*kislyatina*) in every respect. After supper Nozdreff told Tchitchikoff, as he conducted him to an adjoining chamber, where sleeping accommodation was prepared for him, "Here's your bed; but I don't mean to wish you good night."

Tchitchikoff remained in the most unpleasant frame of mind after Nozdreff's departure. He was inwardly vexed with himself, and reproached himself with having come to this house, and thus wasted his time. He reproached himself still more for his indiscretion in discussing a business matter with Nozdreff, which was acting indiscreetly, like a child, like a fool in fact, for the matter was not at all of a kind which could be intrusted to Nozdreff.

"Nozdreff is a worthless fellow, who lies, embellishes his facts, and is capable of setting afloat the deuce knows what. Some scandal will surely arise. It was not prudent to tell him that—not prudent at all! I am a perfect fool!" added our friend to himself.

He slept very badly that night. Certain small but very dauntless insects bit him in an intolerably painful manner, so that when he had scratched a whole handful off himself he exclaimed "I wish the devil had taken you, and Nozdreff also!"

He woke early in the morning. His first act, after putting on his dressing-gown and boots, was to cross the yard to the stable and order Selifan to harness the britchka at once. As he was returning through the yard he met Nozdreff, who was also in his dressing-gown, and had a pipe between his lips.

Nozdreff greeted him in a friendly way, and inquired how he had slept.

"So-so," replied Tchitchikoff very drily.

"As for myself, my dear fellow," said Nozdreff, "I had the horrors all night—it's terrible to speak of it; it seems as if a squadron had bivouacked in my mouth. I yelled so; for, just fancy, I dreamed that I was being flogged, ha, ha! And by

/hom do you suppose? You'll never guess it. Why, by taff-Captain Potzyelueff and my friend Kuvshinnikoff."

"Yes," thought Tchitchikoff to himself, "it would be a good ning if they would really give you a sound drubbing in real life."

"By heavens! it was extremely painful," resumed Nozdreff. I woke up, and, devil take it! there actually was something cratching me; in fact, it was the fleas. Now, go and dress ourself; I will join you immediately. I have only to give that ascally steward of mine a good cursing."

Tchitchikoff went to his room to wash and dress. When he merged into the dining-room after performing his ablutions, ne tea-things and a bottle of rum were already standing on the able. Traces of the dinner and supper of the preceding day ere still about the room. The broom did not appear to have een applied at all, for the floor was strewn with bits of crust, nd some tobacco-ash still lay on the tablecloth. Nozdreff imself, who entered immediately afterwards, had nothing on esides his dressing-gown, which, being partially open, disclosed is bare hairy chest. As he held his tchibouk in his hand and ipped his tea, he was a very fine sight indeed for one of those ainters who object to gentlemen whose hair is too well-brushed nd curled, or who are too sprucely attired.

"Well, what do you think about it?" said Nozdreff after a rief silence; "won't you play for the souls?"

"I have already told you, my dear fellow, that I don't play will purchase them, if you like."

"Then I won't sell; that wouldn't be behaving in a friendly anner. I won't take money for the deuce knows what. But ay is another matter. Let's cut the cards at least."

"I have already said no."

"And you won't change your mind?"

"No; I will not."

"Then listen; let us play at draughts: if you win, all the ad souls will be yours. For I have a great many who must be ossed out of the next census list. Hey, there, Porfiriy, fetch e draught-board here!"

"It is useless trouble; I shall not play," said Tchitchikoff.

"But this is not gambling. There can be no luck or falsifying this; it's all skill. I even warn you in advance that I hardly now how to play at all; so perhaps you will allow me something start with."

"Well, I'll try it," said Tchitchikoff to himself. "I'll play draughts with him. I used to play the game rather well, d it will be difficult for him to indulge in any of his tricks in "

"So be it," he then observed aloud. "If you like, I will play draughts."

"The souls shall stand for one hundred roubles."

"Why so? It will be enough if they are reckoned at fifty."

"No, no! what sort of a stake is fifty roubles? But it will be better for me to include in the hundred roubles some medium-class dog, or a gold watch-seal."

"Well, as you like," said Tchitchikoff.

"How many kings will you give me?" said Nozdreff.

"Eh? Why, none, of course."

"Let me at least have two moves."

"No, I won't; I am a bad player myself."

"We know what a bad player you are," replied Nozdreff, making the first move.

"It is a very long time since I have had any draughts in my hands," said Tchitchikoff, also making a move.

"We know you, and we know just how badly you play," retorted Nozdreff, moving forward another draught, and at the same time a third one with the edge of his sleeve.

"It is a very long time since I had any draughts in my hand," again repeated Tchitchikoff. "But eh, eh! what's that, my good fellow? Put that back!"

"What?"

"That draught," said Tchitchikoff, and at the same instant he caught sight of another almost under his very nose, which seemed to have become a king spontaneously. Where it had come from, God only knew. "No," said Tchitchikoff, rising from the table, "there is absolutely no possibility of playing with you! Things are not managed like that—three pieces moved at a time."

"What do you mean by three? It was a mistake. One moved without my knowing it; I'll take it back, if you like."

"And the other—where did it come from?"

"Which other?"

"This one, which has become a king."

"The idea! As if you didn't recollect!"

"No, my good fellow; I counted all the moves, and I remember everything. You put it there just now. That's where it belongs."

"What—where's the place?" said Nozdreff, reddening. "I see, my dear fellow, that you are a romancer."

"No, my good fellow; it seems that you are the romancer, but an unsuccessful one."

"For whom do you take me?" asked Nozdreff. "Do you mean to say that I am cheating?"

"I do not take you for anything, but I will never play with you again from this time forth."

"No; you can't give it up," said Nozdreff, becoming angry, "the game has begun!"

"I have a right to leave off, since you don't play in a manner becoming to an honest man."

"What! you lie! You cannot say that!"

"No, my good fellow, you yourself are lying."

"I did not cheat, and you cannot refuse to play. You must finish the game."

"You cannot make me do so," rejoined Tchitchikoff coolly; and, stepping up to the board, he mixed all the draughts together.

Nozdreff fired up at once, and came so near to Tchitchikoff that the latter retreated a couple of paces.

"I will force you to play! It doesn't matter if you have mixed up the draughts. I remember all the moves. We will put them back just as they were."

"No, my dear fellow; that matter is ended. I won't play with you."

"You won't play?"

"You see yourself that it is impossible to play with you."

"No; say plainly that you won't play," said Nozdreff, stepping up closer to him.

"I won't!" replied Tchitchikoff, as he raised both hands nearer to his face in case of an emergency, for matters were really coming to a crisis. This precaution of his was very well timed, for Nozdreff gave a sweep of his arm, and one of our hero's fat and pleasant-looking cheeks would have been marked with indelible dishonour if, fortunately, he had not parried the blow, seized Nozdreff with both hands, and squeezed him powerfully.

"Porfiriy! Pavlushka!" shouted Nozdreff in a rage, and striving to free himself.

On hearing these words, Tchitchikoff, so as not to let the servants be witnesses of any disgraceful scene, and conscious at the same time that it was useless to hold Nozdreff, released his grasp. At the same moment Porfiriy and Pavlushka, the latter a robust young fellow, whom it would have been hard to contend against, came in.

"So you won't finish the game?" asked Nozdreff. "Answer me plainly."

"It is impossible to finish the game," said Tchitchikoff, and he glanced out of the window. He saw his britchka standing quite ready, and Selifan seemed to be merely awaiting a sign to drive up to the porch. However, there was no possibility of getting out of the room; the two stout peasants stood at the door.

"So you won't finish the game?" repeated Nozdreff, with his face burning as if it were on fire.

"If you had played as befits an honest man, I would have gone on; but now I cannot."

"Ah! so you cannot, you rascal! When you saw that you couldn't have it all your own way, you threw it up. Thrash him!" shrieked Nozdreff, quite beside himself, and turning to Porfiriy and Pavlushka, while he himself firmly grasped his cherry-wood tchibouk. Tchitchikoff turned as pale as a sheet. He tried to say something, but felt that his lips moved without producing a sound. "Thrash him!" screamed Nozdreff, rushing

forward with his pipe-stem, and covered with perspiration, as though he had attacked an impregnable fortress. "Thrash him!" he yelled, in the same voice with which some despairing lieutenant, at the moment of a great assault, shouts "Forward, children!" to his men. However, if Nozdreff imagined himself to be some desperately enthusiastic officer attacking a fortress, the stronghold upon which he was marching did not in the least resemble an impregnable one. On the contrary, Tchitchikoff experienced such terror that his heart seemed to sink to his heels. The chair with which he had contemplated defending himself had already been torn from his hands by the serfs; already, with his eyes half shut, and feeling more dead than alive, he prepared to take a taste of his host's Circassian tchibouk, and no one knows what would have become of him, had not fate been graciously pleased to save his ribs, his shoulders, and his hind-quarters. All of a sudden, and in the most unexpected manner, as though coming from the clouds, the quivering jingle of bells became audible, and then the rumbling of the wheels of a telyéga driving up to the porch resounded, the heavy snorting and oppressed breathing of the heated horses reverberating in the very room. They all involuntarily glanced out of the window. Someone with a moustache, in a military-looking surtout, descended from the telyéga. After inquiring in the ante-room, he entered while Tchitchikoff was still quaking with alarm, being, indeed, in the most pitiable situation in which mortal ever found himself.

"Allow me to inquire which of you gentlemen is Mr. Nozdreff," said the stranger, looking with some surprise both at Nozdreff himself, who was standing, tchibouk in hand, and at Tchitchikoff, who seemed dismayed.

"Allow me to inquire, first of all, to whom I have the honour of speaking," said Nozdreff, stepping up closer to the stranger.

"The captain-ispravnik."*

"And what do you want, pray?"

"I have come to acquaint you with the fact that you will remain under arrest until your case is decided."

"What nonsense! What case?" asked Nozdreff.

"You have been mixed up in a scandalous affair—as you know very well. While in a state of intoxication you and some companions grossly insulted landowner Maximoff and beat him."

"You lie! I never yet set eyes on landowner Maximoff."

"My dear sir, permit me to inform you that I am an officer; you can reply like that to your servants, but not to me."

Hereupon Tchitchikoff, without waiting to hear what retort Nozdreff would make, hastily snatched up his cap and slipped past the captain-ispravnik on to the steps, seated himself in his britchka, and ordered Selifan to drive off, urging his horses to the top of their speed.

* The head of the rural police.

CHAPTER FIVE

SOBAKEVITCH

OUR hero was thoroughly frightened. Although his britchka was rolling along at full speed, and Nozdreff's village had long since disappeared from sight behind the meadows, the declivities, and hillocks, he still kept looking behind him in terror, as though he expected that a pursuing party would suddenly make its appearance. He breathed with difficulty, and when he laid his hand upon his heart, he found that it was going thump, thump, like a woodcock in a cage. "Ah, what a fright he gave me! Only think of it!" Then all sorts of forcible and unpleasant wishes were heaped upon Nozdreff: some ugly words even occurred in the course of all this. Tchitchikoff was a Russian, and in a rage. Moreover, it was by no means a matter for jest. "Say what you like," he said to himself, "if that captain-ispravnik had not come in, I might never have looked upon the light of God again. I should have disappeared like a bubble in the water, without leaving a trace, without any posterity, without having acquired for my future children any property or position or even an honourable name." Our hero, it will be observed, was very solicitous about his descendants.

"He's a brute, that Nozdreff," thought Selifan to himself. "I never saw such a fellow before. I'd like to spit on him! It's all well enough not to give a man anything to eat, but you ought to feed a horse properly; a horse loves oats; that's his fodder; what bread and meat are for us, so oats are for him; his provisions."

The horses, also, apparently, entertained an unfavourable opinion of Nozdreff; the piebald one especially. Although the worst oats always fell to his share, and although Selifan never poured any into his manger without saying, "O you rascal!" still he usually did have some oats, and not plain hay; but at Nozdreff's he had been given hay alone, and that was not proper. So, like everyone else, he was far from being content.

The cogitations of man and beast alike were suddenly interrupted in a most unexpected manner. The horses, Tchitchikoff, and Selifan abruptly came to themselves when a calash drawn by six horses bore down upon them. Almost directly afterwards there rang out the frightened cries of two ladies seated in the

calash, and the curses and threats of their coachman, who bawled out "O, you rascal! I shouted to you at the top of my voice, 'Turn to the right, you jack-a-napes!' Are you drunk?"

Selifan was conscious of his neglect of duty; but, as a Russian never likes to acknowledge himself in the wrong before another, he immediately drew himself up, and retorted, "And what were you dashing along in that way for? Did you leave your eyes in pawn in some wine-shop?" Then he began to back the britchka, trying by this means to free it from the other equipage, but all in vain; everything was entangled. The ladies in the calash looked on at all this with alarm depicted on their countenances. One of them was old, and the other quite young—she was a girl of sixteen, with her golden hair neatly and prettily wound about her small head. The lovely oval of her face was like that of a fresh egg, and it shone with a certain transparent whiteness, also like an egg when it is held against the light in the sun-browned hands of the housekeeper examining it. The girl's delicate ears also transmitted a warm, rosy light; and, in addition to all this, the terror expressed by her parted lips and the tears in her eyes—in fact, everything made her so charming that our hero gazed at her for several minutes without paying the slightest heed to the confusion which had arisen between the horses and the coachmen.

"Get out of the way, you Nizhegorod crow!" shouted the strange driver. Selifan drew back his reins, the strange coachman did the same, the horses retreated a little, and then again came into collision, and kicked over the traces. Hereupon the piebald horse was so delighted at the idea of making some new acquaintances, that he absolutely refused to back, but laying his nose upon the neck of a new-found friend, seemed to be whispering something into his ear—some horrible nonsense, probably, for the horse of the calash kept shaking his ears incessantly.

However, some moujiks from the village, which, happily, was near by, finally assembled on the scene of disorder. Such a spectacle is a boon to the moujik, just as a newspaper or a club is to a German, so a throng of peasants soon collected about the equipages, only the old women and little children being left in the village. The traces were unhitched; a few blows dealt upon the piebald's nose made him spring back; in a word, the teams were disentangled and led apart. But whether they were vexed at being separated from their newly-found friends, or were simply obstinate, at all events, whip them as the coachmen would, they refused to stir, standing stockstill as though rooted to the spot.

The sympathy of the peasants became acute. They vied with one another in offering advice. "Go, Andriushka," said one of them, "lead that side-horse on the right, and let uncle Mityai mount the shaft horse. Get on, uncle Mityai." Long, gaunt Mityai, a fellow with a red beard, climbed upon the shaft-horse, where he looked like the village bell-tower, or, rather, like a

well-pole, with which water is drawn from a well. The coachman lashed his horses, but nothing came of it: uncle Mityai rendered no assistance. "Stop, stop!" then shouted the peasants. "Get on the side-horse, uncle Mityai, and let uncle Minyai mount the shaft-horse." Uncle Minyai, a broad-shouldered moujik, with a beard as black as pitch, and a belly like the gigantic samovar in which sbiten is prepared for a large party of frozen market folks, willingly mounted the shaft-horse, which almost fell to the earth beneath his weight. "Now matters will go better," cried the peasants. "Warm him up, warm him up! Give a taste of the whip to that dun horse, who has planted his legs obstinately apart, like a koramora."*

But perceiving that matters did not improve, and that the warming up did no good, uncle Mityai and uncle Minyai both mounted the shaft-horse, and Andriushka got upon the side one. Finally the coachman, losing patience, made both uncle Mityai and uncle Minyai dismount; and he did right, for the horses were steaming as though they had journeyed a whole stage at full speed without drawing breath. He allowed them to rest for a moment, after which they started off of their own accord. While this was going on Tchitchikoff stared with great attention at the young stranger in the calash. He made several attempts to address her, but for some reason or other he was unsuccessful. At last the ladies departed; the girl's pretty head, delicate features, and slender form disappeared, somewhat like a vision; and there only remained—the road, the britchka, the troika of horses so well known to the reader, Selifan, Tchitchikoff, and the low-lying, blank-looking fields around.

As Selifan drove off again, Tchitchikoff began to think about the young girl in the calash. "She was a pretty little thing," said he, opening his snuffbox, and taking a pinch of snuff. "She was nicely dressed too," he added. "So I suppose that she is well off. I wonder what sort of a man her father is. Is he a wealthy landowner of respectable morals, or simply a man with money acquired in the public service? This girl might have a dowry of two hundred thousand roubles or so, and she would be a very, very appetising little morsel. Such a dowry would be quite a fortune to many a respectable man."

The snug little sum of two hundred thousand roubles appeared to his mind in such fascinating colours, that he even began to feel vexed with himself for not having inquired who the travellers were during the stoppage which had followed upon the accident. However, the appearance of Sobakevitch's village speedily changed his thoughts, and caused them to turn to the matter he had in hand.

The village struck him as a tolerably large one; to right and left of it, like two wings, one dark, the other light, stretched two woods, one of birch trees and the other of pines; in the

* A large, long gnat, which when it alights on a wall may be approached and easily seized by the legs.

centre rose up a wooden house, with a mezzanine storey, a red roof, and walls painted a dull grey—it was a house of the sort usually erected among us on military settlements and by German colonists. It was apparent also that, during its construction, the architect had had to carry on a constant struggle with the owner's tastes. This architect had been a pedant, and had desired symmetry, but the owner had wanted comfort, and had sacrificed all the windows on one side of the house so as to avoid draughts. And, moreover, the verandah was by no means in the middle of the frontage, for the owner had given orders to omit one column on one side, so that there were only three columns instead of four, as had been originally provided for. The yard was surrounded by palings of unusual strength and thickness, and the owner evidently paid great attention to the question of durability. Huge, untrimmed beams, calculated to last for centuries, had been employed in building the stables, the carriage-house, and the kitchen. The moujiks' huts in the village were also wonderfully well put together; there were no brick walls, no carvings or other adornments, but everything was solid and in proper condition. In short, everything at which Tchitchikoff gazed was substantial, and firm, but had an unprepossessing look.

As he drove up to the porch, he caught sight of two people, who looked out of one of the windows at almost the same moment —a woman with a cap on her head, and with a face as long and narrow as a cucumber; and a man whose countenance was as round as the Moldavian pumpkins called calabashes, with which, in Russia, *balalaikas** are made—those light, two-stringed instruments, the ornament and the solace of the susceptible youth of twenty, who walks along in his dandified way, winking at the white-bosomed, white-necked maidens who have assembled to listen to his soft music. After taking a peep out of the window, both faces disappeared at the same moment. A lackey in a grey jacket, with a tall blue collar, made his appearance upon the steps, and led Tchitchikoff into the vestibule, where Sobakevitch himself came to meet him. On catching sight of his visitor, he said abruptly, "Pray enter," and led him inside the house.

When they had entered the drawing-room, Sobakevitch pointed to an arm-chair, and said, "Pray be seated." Then Tchitchikoff, as he seated himself, glanced at the walls, and at the pictures which were hanging on them. These pictures were portraits of young men, Greek military leaders, portrayed at full length. At the window hung a cage, out of which peeped a dark-brown thrush with white spots, which, strange as it may seem, bore a striking resemblance to its master. The host and his guest had not been together two minutes, when the door of the drawing-room opened, and the hostess came in—a tall lady in a cap with ribbons, which had been dyed with some home-made dye. She

* A primitive kind of guitar.

entered in stately fashion, holding her head as erect as a palm-tree holds its crest.

"This is my Feodulia Ivanovna," said Sobakevitch. Tchitchikoff approached, and kissed the hand which she almost shoved against his lips, and this afforded him an opportunity of observing that her hand had been washed in salt water in which some cucumbers had been kept. This is said to be very good for the skin. "Let me present this gentleman to you, my love," continued Sobakevitch: "Pavel Ivanovitch Tchitchikoff! I had the honour of making his acquaintance at the houses of the governor and the chief of police."

Feodulia Ivanovna invited our hero to seat himself, making a movement with her head similar to those made by actresses when they are impersonating queens. Then she seated herself on the sofa, covered her shoulders with her merino kerchief, and did not move so much as an eye or an eyebrow.

Tchitchikoff again raised his eyes to the walls, and again beheld the Greek heroes and the thrush in the cage. "We were speaking of you at the presiding judge's—Ivan Grigorevitch's —on Friday evening last," he said at last, perceiving that Sobakevitch and his wife were not disposed to begin the conversation. "We passed the time very pleasantly there."

"Yes: I was not at the president's on that occasion," replied Sobakevitch.

"He is a very fine man."

"Who?" asked Sobakevitch, looking at the stove in the corner.

"The president of the court."

"Well, perhaps he strikes you that way; but in reality the world has never produced such another fool."

Tchitchikoff was rather taken aback by this sharp remark; but recovering himself, he went on, "Of course, no man is exempt from failings; but the governor now—what a fine man *he* is!"

"The governor a fine man?"

"Yes: is he not?"

"Why, he's the greatest robber in the world!"

"What! the governor a robber?" said Tchitchikoff, and he could not in the least understand how the governor came to be numbered among robbers. "I must confess that I never should have thought such a thing," he continued. "Permit me to remark, however, that his behaviour does not correspond with anything of the sort: on the contrary, there is even a kindliness about him." Here our hero drew out, as a proof, a purse which the governor had embroidered with his own hands and given him, and then he spoke in terms of praise with regard to the suave expression of his excellency's countenance.

"But his face is that of a highwayman," said Sobakevitch. "Only give him a knife, and let him loose on the highway, and he'll cut your throat for a copeck, that he will! He and the vice-governor—why they're Gog and Magog!"

"Sobakevitch is evidently not on good terms with them," thought Tchitchikoff. "Shall I talk to him about the chief of police? He seemed to be a friend of his—However, that's nothing to me," he added aloud. "I must acknowledge that the chief of police pleases me most of all. What a fine, open upright character he has! The simplicity of his heart is visible on his face."

"He's a rascal!" said Sobakevitch with the greatest coolness. "He betrays and deceives us, and yet he dines with us! I know them all, and they are all rascals; the whole town is just the same: scoundrel sits by scoundrel, and rails against other scoundrels. They are all betrayers of Christ. There's only one honest man there—the procurator; and he's a pig, if the truth must be told!"

After these laudatory remarks, Tchitchikoff perceived that there was no use in mentioning the other officials; and he now recalled the fact that Sobakevitch was not fond of speaking well of any one.

"Well, my love, shall we have some dinner?" said Sobakevitch's wife to her husband.

"Pray let us have it!" replied Sobakevitch. Thereupon, approaching the table, the host and his guest drank a glass of vodka apiece, as was fitting, tasted some zakuska, as all people do through all the length and breadth of Russia, including various salted viands and other appetising dishes, and then repaired to the dining-room: before them, like a swimming goose, went the hostess.

The small table was set for four. At the fourth place there speedily appeared—it is difficult to say precisely what; whether a lady or a girl, a relative, a housekeeper, or simply someone who was living in the house—at all events, a somebody without a cap, about thirty years old, in a gown of motley hues.

"The cabbage soup is very good to-day, my soul," said Sobakevitch, after sipping his soup, and taking on his plate a huge supply of *nyani*, a dish which consists of breast of mutton stuffed with buckwheat groats, brains, and trotters. "Such nyani as this," he added, turning to Tchitchikoff, "cannot be got in town: the Devil knows what they give you there!"

"But the governor's table wasn't bad," said Tchitchikoff.

"But do you know what all his stuff is made of? You wouldn't eat it if you did know."

"I do not know how it is prepared, and I am no judge of that; but the pork cutlets and the boiled fish were excellent."

"So it seemed to you. But I know what they buy at the market. That rascal of a cook, who has taken lessons of a Frenchman, buys a cat, skins it, and serves it up on the table instead of a hare."

"Faugh! what unpleasant things you say!" said Sobakevitch's wife.

"What of it, my love? That's the way they manage things.

I am not to blame if they do so. Every superfluous thing, which our Akulka throws—if I may be allowed to mention it—into the swill-tub, they put in their soup—yes, in their soup! And there you have the truth!"

"You are always telling that sort of thing at table," returned Sobakevitch's wife again.

"What of it, my soul?" said Sobakevitch: "if I did that myself—but I tell you to your face, that I wouldn't eat filth. If you were even to smother a frog in sugar, I wouldn't put him in my mouth, and I won't touch oysters either: I know what an oyster is like. Take some mutton," he continued, turning to Tchitchikoff; "this is breast of mutton with stuffing. It's none of those fricassees, such as are made in gentlemen's kitchens from meat which has been flung round in the market for four days! It is the German and French doctors who invented all that. I'd like to hang them all for it! They have invented dieting, too—which is curing people by hunger. Because they have weak natures themselves they fancy that they know how to doctor Russian stomachs! No, all that isn't the right thing by any means; it's all humbug; it's all——" Here Sobakevitch nodded his head very angrily. "Ah! they are always talking about civilisation, civilisation; and their civilisation is—faugh! I wanted to use another word, but it would have been indecent at table. I don't have anything of that sort in my house. When I have pork, I send the whole pig to table; when I have mutton, I bring on the whole sheep; or goose, and then we have the whole goose! I'd rather have only two dishes, and eat as my fancy dictates." Sobakevitch confirmed his words by action: he piled half the breast of mutton upon his plate, ate all the meat, gnawed the bones, and sucked them to the very last one.

"Yes," thought Tchitchikoff, "that man's thick lips do not belie him."

"I don't have things," now said Sobakevitch, wiping his hands on his napkin, "I don't manage things here, as a certain Pliushkin manages them at his house: he owns eight hundred souls, and yet he lives and dines worse than my shepherd."

"Who is this Pliushkin?" asked Tchitchikoff.

"A scoundrel!" replied Sobakevitch. "He's such a miser as you can hardly conceive of. Prisoners live better in jail than he does: all his serfs have died, one after another, of hunger."

"Really," interposed Tchitchikoff, with interest. "And do you mean to say that his people actually die off in great numbers?"

"They die like flies."

"Like flies! Is it possible? But allow me to ask you, how far away from you does he live?"

"Five versts."

"Five versts!" exclaimed Tchitchikoff: and he was even conscious of a slightly accelerated action of the heart. "And when you emerge from your gates, is it towards the right, or the left?"

"I should advise you not to think of going to that dog's!" said Sobakevitch.* "It is more excusable for a man to go to some improper place than to his house."

"Oh! I was not inquiring with any special object, but merely because I take an interest in knowing about all sorts of places," replied Tchitchikoff.

After the breast of mutton came some *votrushka*†, each of which was bigger than a plate; then a turkey, as large as a calf, stuffed with all sorts of good things—eggs, rice, liver, and heaven knows what; all placed in a ball inside the bird. This ended the dinner: but when they rose from the table, Tchitchikoff felt that he weighed a whole pood‡ more than usual. They went into the drawing-room, where a dish of preserves was already awaiting them—neither pears nor plums, however, nor indeed any special sort of fruit—and which, by the way, neither the host nor the guest touched. The hostess went out in order to procure some other little dainties, and taking advantage of her absence, Tchitchikoff turned to Sobakevitch, who was leaning back in an arm-chair, feeling barely capable of grunting after such a heavy meal, and merely emitting certain unintelligible sounds, while he crossed himself and covered his face every now and then with his hands. Tchitchikoff turned to him with these words: "I should like to speak with you on a matter of business."

"Here are some more preserves," at this moment said the hostess, returning with a small plate; "they are a good sort, sweetened with honey."

"We'll attend to that later on," said Sobakevitch. "Go to your room now: Pavel Ivanovitch and I are going to take off our coats, and have a little rest."

The hostess expressed her desire to send for some feather-beds and pillows; but her husband said, "We want nothing of that: we will rest in the arm-chairs." So Mrs. Sobakevitch withdrew.

Sobakevitch then bent his head slightly, preparatory to hearing what the business might be. Tchitchikoff began in a very distant way, touched upon the Russian Empire in general, and expressed himself in very laudatory terms with regard to its extent, saying that even the ancient Roman Empire had not been so great, and that strangers rightly admired Muscovy. Sobakevitch listened to all this, and nodded, whereupon our hero added that according to the existing laws of the empire, souls (serfs) set down in the census lists, although they might have completed their earthly career, were, nevertheless, still taxed just like the living ones, pending the preparation of a new census list, although, as an offset to that, the newly born were not entered on the registers. Sobakevitch still listened and nodded, and then Tchitchikoff added that despite all the justice of these regulations, they were burdensome for some proprietors, since they entailed upon them

* Sobakevitch's own name is a derivative of *sobaka*, a dog.
† Pancakes with curds. ‡ Forty pounds.

he necessity of paying taxes for dead as well as for live serfs. -le, Tchitchikoff, feeling great personal regard for his friend)obakevitch, was, however, prepared to assume a portion of such 'eally heavy obligations. With regard to this principal point, our hero :xpressed himself very cautiously: he made no direct mention of lead souls, but merely alluded to them as non-existent individuals.

Sobakevitch listened to all the talk as before, with his head)ent and hardly any expression whatever upon his countenance. t seemed as though there were no soul at all in his body, or hat if there were one belonging to it, it was not in the place vhere it should have been. As in the case of Koshtchei the Deathless,* it was no doubt somewhere beyond the mountains.

"Well?" said Tchitchikoff, pausing at last and awaiting a reply, not without some emotion.

"You want some dead souls, eh?" simply inquired Sobakevitch, without showing the slightest surprise, and as if the question were one of selling grain or faggots.

"Yes," replied Tchitchikoff, and he again softened the expression by adding, "non-existent persons."

"They can be found: why not?" said Sobakevitch.

"And if there are any in your village, then, no doubt you—would be glad to get rid of them?"

"I am ready to sell them, if you like," said Sobakevitch, raising his head a little, and recognising the fact that this would-be purchaser must in all probability find some profit in them—though what it was he could hardly tell.

"Deuce take it!" said Tchitchikoff to himself; "this fellow talks of selling before I have barely given a hint." And then he remarked aloud, "And at what price, for instance? though, to be sure, for such things as that, any discussion of price is rather strange."

"Well, I will not demand too much of you: let us say a hundred roubles a head," replied Sobakevitch.

"A hundred!" exclaimed Tchitchikoff, dropping his jaw, and staring at his friend with all his eyes, not knowing whether he had heard him correctly, or whether his tongue, which was heavy by nature, had not turned the wrong way, and let slip one word instead of another.

"What, is that too high for you?" ejaculated Sobakevitch and he added, "Well, what would be your price?"

"My price! We have probably made some mistake, or else we don't understand each other, and have forgotten the main point of this business. For my part, I place my hand on my heart, and suggest that eighty copecks apiece would be a very handsome sum."

"The idea! eighty copecks!"

"Well, in my judgment, it is impossible to offer more."

"But I am not selling shoes."

"Well, you must acknowledge yourself that you are not selling men either."

* A character in Russian folk-lore.

"And so you think that you have found a fool, who will sell you a duly registered soul for eighty copecks?"

"But permit me. Surely those serfs died long ago, and all that remains of them is merely a name, barely perceptible to the senses. However, not to enter into further discussion on this point, I will give you a rouble and a half, if you like, but I cannot give more."

"You ought to be ashamed to mention such a sum! You are haggling: state a real price."

"I cannot go beyond that, Mikhail Semenovitch, believe me; on my conscience, I cannot: what cannot be done cannot be," said Tchitchikoff. However, he added another half-rouble.

"Now, why are you so niggardly?" said Sobakevitch: "really that isn't dear! Some other scoundrel will deceive you and sell you rubbish, and not real dead souls; but mine are as sound as nuts, picked articles: there's no better artisan than a healthy moujik. Just consider the matter: here's Mikhyeeff, the carriage-builder! Why, no better equipages are made than those he builds. And his work's not like Moscow work, made merely to last an hour; such durability! And he pads his carriages, and varnishes them so beautifully too!"

Tchitchikoff opened his mouth to remark that Mikhyeeff had left the world a long while ago: but Sobakevitch had warmed up to his subject, as the saying runs, and he went on speaking as follows:—

"And Probka Stepan, the carpenter! I'll wager my head that you won't find another such moujik anywhere. What a stout fellow he was, to be sure! God knows what the authorities would have given to have him serve in the Guards: he was three arshins and a vershok in height."*

Again Tchitchikoff felt inclined to remark that Probka had not been in the world for a long time; but Sobakevitch had evidently got well started, and such a flood of speech poured forth from his mouth that our friend was constrained to listen.

"Milushkin, the brickmaker, too; he could set up an oven in any house whatever. Maksim Telyatnikoff, the cobbler: what ever he pricked with his awl became a boot at once; and as for his boots, they were wonderful. Besides which he was always as sober as a judge. And Yeremei Sorokoplekhin! Now that moujik was worth a fortune; he traded at Moscow, and he alone paid obrok† to the amount of five hundred roubles a year. What a set of people to be sure! Mine are not at all the sort of dead souls that some Pliushkin or other would sell you."

"But permit me," said Tchitchikoff at last, astounded by such a copious flood of words, to which there was apparently no end; "why do you enumerate all these men's qualities? Surely, that

* An *arshin* is 28 inches; a *vershok* is 1¾ inch: consequently Probka (*cork*) Stepan was 7 feet 1¾ inch high.

† *Obrok*, a tax which was paid in lieu of personal labour on the estate by serfs who were allowed to exercise their callings in the towns.

does not concern us now, since they are all dead. A dead body is only good to prop up a fence with, says the proverb."

"Yes, certainly, they are dead," said Sobakevitch, as though considering the subject, and recalling the fact that they really were defunct; and then he added, "Well, what's the use of talking about these men, although they are still reckoned as alive? What sort of men are those who are still alive? Flies, and not men at all!"

"But they do still exist, whereas the dead ones are merely visionary."

"Well, no, they are not visionary. I tell you that you won't even find any such men as Mikhyeeff: such a machinist as he was will never set foot in this room again. No, that's no vision. And there was more strength in his big shoulders than in any horse. Where, I should like to know, could you find such a vision?"

"Well, I cannot give more than two roubles apiece," said Tchitchikoff.

"No, no; but in order that you may not pretend that I am asking a high price, and won't make you any concessions, I will pay seventy-five roubles a soul: only it must be in bank-notes —and that's really only for acquaintance' sake."

"Well, what can he think?" said Tchitchikoff to himself: "does he take me for a fool?" and then he added aloud, "Really, you surprise me; there seems to be some theatrical performance or comedy going on between us: otherwise I cannot understand it. You seem to be a sensible man. You have all the marks of possessing a cultivated mind. Surely these are paltry goods— tu! fu! What are they worth? What are they good for?"

"Well, but you are buying them: they must be of some use to you."

Here Tchitchikoff bit his lips, and felt at a loss for an answer. He began to talk about some family affairs, but Sobakevitch simply replied:—

"I do not require to know what your connections are: I do not meddle in family matters, that is your own affair. You need the souls, and I will sell them to you, and perhaps you will regret not having bought them.

"Two roubles," said Tchitchikoff.

"So you are like Yakov's magpie, who repeated the same thing on every occasion, as the proverb says. Give something like what they are worth."

"Well, may the deuce take him!" said Tchitchikoff to himself. "I'll add half a rouble, as a sop!—I will add half a rouble, if you like."

"Well, and if you like, I'll say my last word to you: fifty roubles. Truly, it's a loss to me, and you can't purchase such fine people anywhere so cheap!"

"What a hard-headed beast!" said Tchitchikoff to himself; and then he continued aloud with some vexation, "Yes: what's

the use of discussing it after all, just as though it were a serious affair, when I can get them elsewhere, for nothing, too. So far every one has gladly handed them over to me, simply for the sake of getting rid of them as speedily as possible. The man who holds on to them and pays taxes on them is a fool!"

"But do you know," replied Sobakevitch, "that this sort of purchase—I say this strictly between ourselves, and out of friendship—is not always legal, and if I were to report it, or if anyone else were to do so, the party concerned would never have any credit in the matter of contracts, or if he wished to enter into any profitable connections?"

"So that's what you are aiming at, you sly scoundrel!" thought Tchitchikoff, and he immediately remarked with the most nonchalant air, "As you please. I am buying them, not from any necessity, as you imagine, but because my own views incline me to do so. If you won't take two roubles and a half, then good-day to you."

"I can't put him out: he won't give way," thought Sobakevitch. "Well, God be with you! give me thirty, and take them."

"No; I see that you do not wish to sell them, so farewell."

"Permit me! permit me!" said Sobakevitch, holding Tchitchikoff's hand, and treading on his foot, for our hero had forgotten to guard himself; realising this, the host gave a hiss, and then jumped upon our friend's other foot.

"I beg your pardon!" he said, "I seem to have inconvenienced you. Please to sit down here: pray do!" Then he seated Tchitchikoff in the chair, rather skilfully than otherwise, like a bear who has been tamed, and who knows how to twirl himself about, and to perform tricks when asked, "Show us how women bathe, Misha!" or, "How do little children steal peas, Misha?"

"Really, I am wasting time: I must make haste," replied our hero.

"Sit still a little minute, and I will say something presently which will please you." Here Sobakevitch moved nearer to him, and said softly in his ear, as though it were a secret, "Will you give—a corner?"*

"That is to say, twenty-five roubles? Ni, ni, ni! I won't give even the quarter of a corner: I won't add a copeck more!"

Sobakevitch now said nothing: Tchitchikoff also held his peace. The Greek heroes, with their aquiline noses, gazed down from the wall upon this barter, with great attention.

"What is your final price?" asked Sobakevitch at last.

"Two and a half."

"Really, a human soul is the same to you as boiled beetroot. Won't you give three roubles?"

"I cannot."

"Well, there's nothing to be done with you: have it as you

* In card-playing, one-fourth of the stake, which is indicated by turning down the corner of the card.

like. It's a loss to me, but I have a dog's nature: I cannot refrain from doing my neighbour a kindness. I suppose I shall have to prepare a deed of sale, so that all may be in proper form?"

"Of course."

"Well, then, here's another point: I shall have to go to town."

Thus the transaction was completed. They both decided to visit the town on the following day and draw up the deed of sale. Tchitchikoff then asked for a list of the peasants. Sobakevitch readily agreed to give one, and immediately stepped up to his desk and began to write down the list, not only giving the serfs' names, but duly indicating their admirable qualities.

"The list is ready at last," he eventually said, turning round. "Ready? Please bring it here." Tchitchikoff ran it over and was amazed by its accuracy and punctiliousness. Not only were the professions circumstantially described, the names, ages, and conditions of the various serfs, but on the margins there were notes respecting their behaviour and sobriety; in a word, it was a pleasure to look at the list.

"Now, please to give me the earnest-money," said Sobakevitch.

"Why should you receive earnest-money? You will receive all the money at once, in town."

"Well, you know that earnest-money is customary," rejoined Sobakevitch.

"I do not know how I can give you any, for I have brought no money with me. Yes, here are ten roubles."

"Ten roubles, indeed! Give me fifty at least!"

Tchitchikoff again denied that he had any money with him; but Sobakevitch asserted so positively that he must have some, that he drew out another bank-note, saying, "Here are fifteen more, if you like, and that will make twenty-five. Only please to hand me a receipt."

"What do you want with a receipt?"

"It is always better to have a receipt, you know. Circumstances may change—all sorts of things may happen."

"Very good: give me the money, then."

"But why give you the money? Here it is in my hand: as soon as you have written the receipt, you shall have it."

"But, pray, how am I to write out a receipt? I must see the money first."

Tchitchikoff relinquished the notes he held to Sobakevitch, who, approaching the table, and covering them with his left hand, wrote upon a scrap of paper that he had received twenty-five roubles in imperial bank-notes, as earnest-money for various serfs he had sold. After writing the receipt he looked over the notes again.

"The notes are rather old," he remarked examining one of them at the light, "and somewhat torn, but, between friends, such things must not be considered."

"Close-fisted, close-fisted!" said Tchitchikoff to himself, "and a beast into the bargain!"

"You don't want any female serfs, eh?" asked Sobakevitch.

"No, thank you."

"I could sell some cheap. At a rouble apiece, for old acquaintance' sake."

"No: I have no use for women."

"Well, if you have no use for them, it is useless to talk about them. Taste knows no law. 'One man loves the pope, and another the pope's wife,' says the proverb."

"I should also like to request that this transaction may remain a secret between us," said Tchitchikoff, as he took leave.

"That is a matter of course. A third person has no business to interfere. What takes place between two intimate friends should be confided to their mutual friendship alone. Farewell! I thank you for having visited me. I trust that you will not forget me in the future: if you have a little leisure time, come and dine with me; spend a day here. Perhaps we may be able to render each other some further service."

"That's hardly likely!" said Tchitchikoff to himself, as he seated himself in his britchka. "That close-fisted devil has squeezed two roubles and a half out of me for each dead soul!"

He was dissatisfied with Sobakevitch's conduct. Although they had met at the governor's and the chief of police's, he had behaved like a perfect stranger—he had exacted money for rubbish. When the britchka drove out of the yard, Tchitchikoff glanced back, and perceived that Sobakevitch was still standing upon the threshold, apparently watching his visitor to see where he was going.

"The sly villain, he's still standing there!" he muttered between his teeth; and, after turning towards the peasant's huts, he ordered Selifan to drive off in such a manner that the equipage could not be seen from the house. He wanted to visit Pliushkin, whose people, according to Sobakevitch's account, died like flies, but he did not wish Sobakevitch to know it. When the britchka reached the farther end of the village, he called to the first moujik he met, a fellow who had picked up a thick beam somewhere on the road, and who was dragging it home to his hut on his shoulder, like an indefatigable ant.

"Hey, there, beard! How do you get to Pliushkin's from here, without having to pass your master's house?"

This question seemed to perplex the moujik.

"Don't you know?"

"No, master, I don't know."

"O, you fool! and you've got grey hair, too! Don't you know that miser Pliushkin, the man who feeds his people so badly?"

"Ah! the ragged man with patched clothes!" exclaimed the moujik. "Take that path there, and turn to the right a hundred paces off. Then you will only have to drive straight on."

Thereupon the britchka rolled rapidly away.

CHAPTER SIX

PLIUSHKIN

WHILE Tchitchikoff was still meditating over the nickname of "ragged man" bestowed by the moujik upon Pliushkin, he did not observe that he had arrived in the middle of an extensive village, with a multitude of izbás and streets. But he was soon forced to take notice of the fact by a tolerably severe jolting over the timber-laid road, beside which the stone-paved street of a city is nothing. These planks moved, now up, now down, like the keys of a pianoforte; and an incautious rider received either a slap on the nape of the neck, or a blow on his brow, or was even made to bite the tip of his tongue with his own teeth in a very painful manner. Tchitchikoff observed a certain peculiar antiquity in all the village structures. The timber walls of the izbás were dark and old: many of the roofs were so full of holes that they looked like gratings; on some merely the ridge-pole and the side-rafters remained, in the form of ribs. It seemed as though the owners themselves had torn off the shingles and boards, arguing, and with justice, that badly built izbás are not good shelter-places during rain, and that in fine weather the water does not come through; besides it is no use making a fuss about it, as there is all out-doors and the drinking-shops at one's disposal, and one can go where one likes on the highway. There was no glass in the windows of the little cabins; some were stuffed with rags, or women's petticoats; the little railed balconies, which, for an unknown reason, are built just under the roof on some Russian izbás, were all awry, and blackened even to an unpicturesque degree. Behind the izbás, in many places, stretched huge stacks of grain in rows, and behind the stacks and the ancient izbá roofs two village churches rose up into the clear air, peeping forth, now on the right hand, now on the left, as the britchka took different turns: they stood beside each other, one built of wood, and in ruins; and the other of stone, with yellow walls, all spotted and cracked. Pliushkin's house began to appear at intervals, and at last it came fully into sight just as the last izbás were passed, and when there appeared a desolate vegetable garden or cabbage plantation, surrounded by a low, and in some places dilapidated, fence. This strange dwelling-place, which was very long, had a decrepit

look. In some places it was one storey high, in others two; upon its dark roof, which did not, in many parts, afford adequate protection from the weather, on account of its age, there towered two belvederes, one facing the other, both already tottering, and destitute of any trace of paint. The walls of the house presented naked lattice-work in lieu of plaster to view in various spots, and they had evidently been subjected to all sorts of inclement weather—rain, whirlwinds, and autumnal changes. Only two of the windows were open: the rest were closed with shutters, or simply barricaded with boards. And even these two windows were damaged: one of them being darkened by a triangular piece of blue sugar-paper pasted over it.

The old and spacious garden, which stretched away behind the house, running towards the village, and then merging into a meadow, seemed to be the only fresh spot about the place, and formed the only picturesque feature in the desolate landscape. The crests of the trees, which had grown at their own will, rose up against the horizon in verdant clumps and quivering domes of foliage. The colossal white bole of a beech tree, deprived of its leafy head, which had been broken off by a gale of wind or a thunderstorm, rose from the midst of this green thicket, looking like a symmetrical column of gleaming white marble against the sky: the slanting, sharply-pointed fracture with which it ended above, instead of there being a capital, appeared dark above the snowy whiteness of the trunk. The hop-plants, which had stifled the lilacs, mountain-ashes, and hazel-bushes, climbing to the top of the fence, also threatened to envelop the shattered beech-tree. They had grown half-way up the trunk and then descended, catching in other trees, and in places hanging in the air, knotting their slender clinging tendrils into rings, which swayed gently in the breeze. The green grove, illumined by the sun, parted here and there, disclosing unlighted depths within it, looking like the dark throats of wild beasts. It was all enveloped in gloom, and in its dark recesses there stood forth here and there, beside a narrow winding path, some rickety arbour surrounded by a railing, with the decayed and hollow trunk of a willow tree, a grey Siberian acacia, and some brushwood, which was all tangled and interlaced. A young maple-bough, too, had stretched forth its green leaves, beneath one of which a sun-ray had crept, God alone knows how, suddenly rendering it fiery, transparent, and wondrously gleaming amid that thick darkness. On one side, at the very edge of the garden, some lofty ash-trees bore the huge nests of crows aloft on their quivering crests. On some of them, boughs which had been half torn away drooped downward, laden with dry leaves. In a word, the scene was beautiful as neither art nor nature alone can invent, but as is only possible when they are both combined, when nature gives the finishing touch with her chisel to the often senseless work of man, lightening the heavy masses, demolishing

all the coarsely conceived regularity and poverty of outline, and casting a wondrous warmth over all which has been planned in cold, measured purity and faultlessness.

After making one or two turns, our hero at length found himself in front of the house, which now appeared even more gloomy than before. The ancient wood fence and gates were already covered with green slime. A cluster of buildings—servants' apartments, storehouses, cellars, evidently falling into decay—stretched on one side of the yard; beside them, to right and left, the gates of other courtyards were visible. Everything here announced that things had been conducted on a grand scale in former times.

Nothing was visible which could enliven the picture—no doors flying open, no crowd of people going in or out, no bustle of the living nor solicitude for the house. The great gates alone were open, and that because a moujik had entered with a laden telyéga covered with a mat. However, Tchitchikoff soon perceived a person who began to quarrel with the moujik who had brought this telyéga. For a long time he could not make out to what sex this person belonged—whether it was a man or a woman. The garb this person wore greatly resembled a woman's cloak, but the voice seemed rather hoarse for a woman's. "It must however, be a woman," said Tchitchikoff to himself, but immediately afterwards he added, "Oh, no!" "But of course it is a woman!" he said at last, after a more searching gaze. The person, meanwhile, stared fixedly at him, as if a visitor was a rarity there. Seeing the keys which hung from this person's belt, and hearing the very abusive words which were being addressed to the moujik, Tchitchikoff inferred that the wearer of the cloak was probably the housekeeper.

"Listen, my good woman," he said, descending from his britchka; "does your master——?"

"Not at home," interrupted the housekeeper, without waiting for him to finish his query; and then, after a momentary pause, she added, "What do you want?"

"I have some business to transact with him."

"Go into the room, there, then," said the housekeeper, opening the door, and showing him her back all spotted over with flour, and a large rent in her cloak. Our hero then entered a dark but spacious vestibule, whence the cold air poured out as though from a cellar. From the vestibule he reached a room which was also dark, being only lighted by a gleam which came through a wide crack under the door. On opening this door he found himself at last in the light, and was very much astonished at the disorder which he beheld before him. It seemed as if the floors were being washed, and as if all the house furniture had been temporarily piled up here. A broken chair was even standing on one table, and beside it was a clock of which the pendulum had stopped, and to this a spider had attached its web. There

also stood a sideboard filled with ancient silver, decanters, and Chinese porcelain. Upon a desk, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, which had already fallen out in pieces, leaving behind it empty yellowish holes filled with glue, lay all sorts of things: a pile of documents, covered with a marble paper-weight which had turned green; an ancient book in a leather binding, with red edges; a lemon, completely dried up, and no larger than a broken walnut-wood knob from an arm-chair; a wineglass covered with a letter, and containing some sort of liquid and three flies; a bit of sealing-wax; a scrap of rag, which had been picked up somewhere; two ink-stained pens dried up and looking as though they were in a consumption; together with a toothpick, which was quite yellow, and with which the owner had probably cleansed his teeth prior to the arrival of the French in Moscow.

Upon the walls several pictures were suspended close together, and without any attempt at arrangement; there was a long, yellow engraving of some battle, with huge drums, shouting soldiers, three-cornered hats, and prancing horses. This lacked a glass, and was mounted in a dilapidated mahogany frame. On a line with this a huge oil painting, which represented some flowers and fruits, with a boar's head, and a duck hanging head downwards, monopolised half the wall. From the middle of the ceiling hung a chandelier enveloped in a linen bag, to which the accumulated dust gave the aspect of a silk-worm's cocoon with the worm in it; and in one corner of the room various things not worthy to lie upon the table were piled up in a heap. It would have been impossible to affirm that a living being inhabited this apartment, had not an ancient threadbare nightcap, which lay upon the table, borne witness to the fact. While Tchitchikoff was still engaged in surveying the place, a side-door opened, and the same housekeeper whom he had encountered in the yard entered the room. But he now became aware that this person was rather a steward than a housekeeper; a housekeeper, at all events, does not shave, whereas this person, on the contrary, shaved every now and then, for his chin and all the lower portion of his cheeks resembled one of those currycombs made of iron wire, with which horses are cleaned down in the stable. Tchitchikoff, imparting an inquiring expression to his countenance, waited impatiently to hear what the steward would say to him. The steward, on his side, waited for Tchitchikoff to speak. At length, our hero, surprised by such strange indecision, made up his mind to inquire.

"Where is your master? Is he at home?"

"Yes, he is here," said the steward.

"Where?" repeated Tchitchikoff.

"What, my good fellow, are you blind?" said the steward. "At home, indeed! I am the master!"

Here our hero involuntarily stepped back, and looked more attentively at this person. It had been his lot to see many sorts

of people—even people such as the author and the reader have never beheld—but such an individual as this one he had never yet looked upon. His face was like that of many gaunt old men, only his chin projected so much that every time he wanted to spit he had to cover it with his handkerchief, in order not to spit upon it; his small eyes were still bright, and they darted about beneath his lofty, bushy brows like mice when they thrust their pointed noses out of their dark holes, prick up their ears, and peer about to see whether a cat, or some scamp of a boy, is not hidden somewhere. His attire was even more worthy of remark. It was difficult to tell of what material his dressing-gown was made; the sleeves and the upper portions of the skirts were greasy and shiny to such a degree that they resembled the Russian leather of which boots are made; behind there were four tails instead of two, from between which protruded some checked cotton. Something, also impossible to distinguish, either a stocking or a belt, but certainly not a neckerchief, was knotted about his neck. In short, if Tchitchikoff had encountered this landowner, thus arrayed, at the door of a church, he would probably have bestowed a copper groschen upon him; for it must be stated, to our hero's credit, that he had a compassionate heart, and could not refrain from giving a copper groschen to a poor man.

However, it was not a beggar, but a landowner, who stood before him. This proprietor possessed over a thousand souls: and one might have searched a long while for a person having so much wheat, flour, and so forth, in his storehouse, or possessing so many storerooms, barns, and drying-houses, filled with sheepskins, both dressed and tanned; and having such quantities of linen, cloth, dried fish, and dried vegetables at his disposal. If anyone had peeped in upon him in his yard, where stores of wood and utensils were accumulated, it would have seemed to him that he had, by some means, come upon the "shavings market" at Moscow, where wooden vessels are sold, and where clever mothers-in-law betake themselves daily, followed by their cooks, to purchase household requisites. At Pliushkin's one found every sort of article in wood, turned, fitted together, and plaited—casks, half-casks, buckets with handles and without handles, tar-barrels, the tubs in which women soak flax and dirty clothes; baskets, made of thin strips of ash; oval boxes of plaited birch-bark, with wooden bottoms and covers; and many other things of various sorts which are of service to the Russians both rich and poor.

But what was the use of all these things to Pliushkin? Two such estates as his could not have used them up in a lifetime, though that seemed to make no difference to him. Not content with what he had, he rambled about the streets of his village, peering beneath the bridges and the planks thrown across the gutters, and everything he came across, whether, it was the

old sole of a shoe, a woman's discarded rag, an iron nail, or a piece of a broken earthenware pot, he carried it all home with him, and threw it upon the heap which Tchitchikoff had observed in the corner of the room. "There's the old fisherman out on his ramble," the moujiks would say, when they spied him searching after his booty. And, in fact, there was no need of sweeping the streets after he had gone on his rounds; if a passing officer chanced to lose a spur, the spur was forthwith transferred to the familiar heap; if a woman gaped over the well, and forgot her pail, Pliushkin carried off the pail. However, whenever a moujik caught him in the act, he never disputed, but immediately surrendered the stolen article; though if it once fell upon his heap, that was the end of it: he swore that it was his own, that he had bought it at such and such a time, of such or such a person, or that he had inherited it from his grandfather. In his own room he picked up everything he saw—a bit of sealing-wax, a scrap of paper, or a tiny feather—and stuffed everything away in his desk, or on the window ledge.

Of course, there had been a time when he had simply been a careful manager, when he had been a married family man, and when his neighbours had been in the habit of coming to dine with him, and listening to him, and taking lessons from him in wise economy. Everything then went on briskly: grain-mills and fulling-mills were in operation, cloth-mills were running, carpenter's shops and spinning-rooms were at work; the searching glance of the master penetrated everywhere and into everything; and carefully, but assiduously, like an industrious spider, did he run about attending to domestic matters. In those times his courteous and talkative wife was renowned for her hospitality; two charming daughters, both fair and as fresh as roses, came to greet the guests: the son, a fine, vivacious little boy, ran out and kissed everybody. All the windows in the house were open then: there was a French tutor, who was a great sportsman, and who was always bringing home partridges or ducks for dinner. And there was also a governess for the little girls. But the good housewife died. Pliushkin became restless, and, like all widowers, suspicious and saving. He did not place full confidence in his eldest daughter, Alexandra Stepanovna, and he was right; for Alexandra Stepanovna soon eloped with a staff-captain, belonging to God knows what regiment of cavalry, and she married him in haste in some village church, although she knew that her father did not like officers on account of a strange, prejudiced belief of long standing, that they were all gamblers and spendthrifts. Her father sent his curse after her, and then the house grew more desolate, its owner became more and more miserly. The French tutor was dismissed, because the time had arrived for the son to enter the civil service; the governess was sent about her business, because it appeared that she was not free from guilt in the matter of Alexandra

Stepanovna's elopement; the son, on being despatched to the chief town of the government, in order to learn official routine, according to his father's wish, enlisted in a regiment instead, and wrote to his father immediately afterwards, asking for some money. Very naturally, he received in reply what the common people call a *shish**. Finally, the last daughter, who had remained at home with the father, died, and the old man found himself the sole guardian, protector, and owner of his wealth.

His lonely life then made him yet more miserly, and as though for the express purpose of confirming him in his opinion of military men, his son ruined himself at cards: he sent him a hearty paternal curse, and never troubled himself afterwards to inquire whether he still existed in the world or not. More windows were shut up every year in the house, until at last only two remained to admit any light, one of which, as the reader has already seen, was pasted up with blue paper. As time went on he paid less and less attention to domestic management, busying himself more about the scraps of paper and feathers which he collected in his room; he became more and more crusty with the people who came to buy the products of his estate; the dealers grew disgusted with him, and finally abandoned him altogether, saying that he was a devil, and not a man; his hay and grain rotted; his ricks and stores of all sorts turned into manure, pure and simple, so that cabbages might have been grown upon them; the flour in his vaults turned to stone, and had to be chopped up: it was terrible to touch the linen, the cloth, and other materials of domestic manufacture; they turned to dust under the hand. He himself had already forgotten what he possessed of any given article. He only remembered the sideboard which contained his decanters of brandy, upon which he had made a mark, in order that no one might thievishly drink the liquor. Meanwhile, however, the revenues of the estate were collected as before: the moujiks had to bring as much obrok as usual, the same tribute of nuts was imposed upon every housewife, and the weaving women were obliged to furnish the same number of webs of linen. Everything finally was piled away in the storerooms and rotted, and he himself became at last scarcely human. His daughter, Alexandra Stepanovna, came a couple of times with her little son, to try whether she could not obtain something: it was evident that a wandering life with a cavalry captain was not so attractive as it had appeared before marriage. However, Pliushkin forgave her, and allowed the little boy to play with a button which was lying on the table, but he gave her no money. On another occasion, Alexandra Stepanovna came with her two children, and brought her father an Easter-cake to eat with his tea, and also a new dressing gown; for the one which he was wearing was in such a state that it made her both

* Literally, an insulting sign, made with the fingers, and what English children call a long nose.

confused and ashamed to look at it. Pliushkin caressed both of his grandchildren, and placing them, one on his right knee and the other on his left, he trotted them exactly as though they had been riding on horses; he also accepted the Easter-cake and the dressing-gown, but he gave his daughter absolutely nothing, whereupon Alexandra Stepanovna took her departure.

But we must return to our hero. Pliushkin had been standing in front of him for several minutes without uttering a word; and Tchitchikoff was still utterly incapable of beginning the conversation, distracted as he was by the sight of the master himself, as well as by all that was in the room. For a long time he could not think how to explain the reason of his visit. He was on the point of expressing himself to the effect that, having heard of Pliushkin as a public benefactor, he had considered it his duty to pay him a personal tribute of respect; but he felt that that would be too much. On casting one more stealthy glance on all that was in the room, he became conscious that the expression *public benefactor* might be successfully replaced by the words *economy* and *order:* so, having reconstructed his sentence on that pattern, he said, that, having heard of his economy and rare skill in managing his estate, he had regarded it as his duty to make his acquaintance and offer his respects in person. He certainly might have alleged some other and better reason, but none occurred to him.

To this, Pliushkin mumbled some reply between his lips, for he had no teeth. What it was exactly is not known, but in all probability the sense was a follows: "May the deuce take you and your respects!" However, since hospitality is in such repute all over Russia that even a miser cannot ignore it laws, he added a little more distinctly, "I beg you most humbly to take a seat. I have not been in the habit of receiving guests for a long time, and I must confess that I perceive but very little use in them. A strange custom has sprung up, of going about to visit people's estates to the neglect of domestic affairs. However, I can't offer you anything, for I dined long ago: and my kitchen is very mean and poor, and the chimneys are in a state of utter ruin; if you try to heat the stove, you will certainly set the house on fire."

"So that't the kind of man he is!" said Tchitchikoff to himself. "It's lucky that I dined at Sobakevitch's, and tucked into that breast of mutton."

"And it is a most unfortunate circumstance, but there is hardly a wisp of hay for your horses in the whole establishment," proceeded Pliushkin. "Yes, and where is there any to be had? The farm is small and barren: the peasants are lazy; they are not fond of working; they only think of getting away to the pot-house. As you know, people are thrown on the world in their old age."

"But I was told," said Tchitchikoff modestly, "that you had over a thousand souls."

"Why! who said that? My good fellow, you should have

spit in the eye of the person who told you that! He was a jester: he evidently wanted to make fun of you. That is the way people talk; but for the last three years a cursed fever has been killing off my serfs in swarms."

"You don't say so! And have many really died?" exclaimed Tchitchikoff sympathetically.

"Yes; a great many have been carried off."

"Will you permit me to inquire the number?"

"Fully eighty souls."

"No, really?"

"I am not in the habit of lying, my good fellow."

"Permit me to ask another question: I assume that you are reckoning these souls from the time when the last census was taken?"

"Glory to God if it were only that!" said Pliushkin; "but since the last census I must have lost fully one hundred and twenty souls."

"Really? fully one hundred and twenty?" exclaimed Tchitchikoff, and he even dropped his jaw somewhat with amazement.

"I am rather old to lie, my good fellow: I have lived seventy years," said Pliushkin, who seemed to have taken offence at our hero's almost joyous exclamation.

Tchitchikoff perceived that such a want of sympathy in another's woe had really been extremely impolite; so he immediately sighed, and said that he felt very sorry.

"Yes, but your sorrow won't put anything in my pocket," said Pliushkin. "There's a captain who lives here near me—the deuce knows where he came from, but he says that he's a relative. 'Dear uncle, dear uncle!' he cries, and he begins to kiss my hand, and to express his sorrow, and raises such a howl that you have to hold your ears. He's very red in the face, and he's actually drinking himself to death on brandy. He probably lost all his money while serving as an officer, or some actress coaxed it out of him; so now he comes here, and tries to wheedle himself into my good graces!"

Tchitchikoff endeavoured to explain that his sympathy was of a very different sort to that of the captain, and that he was ready to prove it, not by empty words, but by deeds; in fact, without deferring the matter any further, he immediately expressed his willingness to take upon himself the responsibility of paying the taxes for all the serfs who had died in such an unfortunate manner. The proposition seemed to amaze Pliushkin. He stared at Tchitchikoff for a long time with his eyes wide open, and he finally inquired, "Haven't you been in the army, my good fellow?"

"No," replied Tchitchikoff, with a good deal of artfulness: "I was in the civil service."

"In the civil service?" repeated Pliushkin, and he began to work his lips about, as though he were chewing something.

"But what do you mean by this? It is surely a loss to you."

"For your sake, I am even prepared to suffer loss."

"Ah, my dear fellow! Ah, my benefactor!" shrieked Pliushkin, not perceiving, in his joy, that the snuff was dropping from his nose in a very unpicturesque fashion, and that the skirts of his dressing-gown, in flying apart, had displayed a very impolite garment to view. "You have comforted an old man! Ah, my Lord! Ah, my Saviour!" Pliushkin could say no more. But a minute had not elapsed, when the joy which had momentarily shown itself on his countenance disappeared as though it had not existed, and his face once more assumed a careworn expression. He even wiped it with his handkerchief; and, rolling this into a ball, he began to draw it along his upper lip.

"With your permission, may I ask if you mean to undertake paying the taxes for them every year? and will you give the money to me, or to the imperial treasury?"

"This is the way we will manage: we will make out a deed of sale for them, as though they were alive, and as though you had sold them to me."

"Yes, a deed of sale," said Pliushkin, falling into thought, and he again began to move his lips as before. "But a deed of sale—it's nothing but an expense. Those officials have no consciences. In former days one used to pay half a rouble in copper as tax for a sack of flour; but now you have to send a whole waggon-load of groats, and add a red bank-note into the bargain—so grasping have they grown. I do not know why no one else has has called attention to that matter."

However, Tchitchikoff immediately remarked that he was even prepared to bear the expenses of the deed of sale.

On hearing that he would pay that, Pliushkin concluded that his visitor must be a thorough fool, and merely pretended that he had been in the civil service, but had probably been an officer instead, and had dallied with actresses. However, with all this, he could not conceal his joy, but wished all sorts of happiness to our hero, and to his children even, without waiting to inquire whether he had any or not. He went to the window, drummed with his fingers on the glass, and cried, "Hey, there, Proshka!"

A moment later, someone could be heard running on tiptoe in the vestibule, and rummaging about there for a long time. Finally the door opened, and Proshka entered, a boy of thirteen, shod in such huge boots that, as he stumbled along, he nearly drew his feet out of them. It may be asked why Proshka had such large boots. Well, for all his domestic servants, no matter how many of them there were in the house, Pliushkin had but a single pair of boots, which was always to be found in the vestibule. Anyone who was summoned into the master's presence generally ran across the yard barefooted; but on entering the vestibule he pulled on the boots, and, thus arrayed, made his appearance in the room. On quitting the master's apartment, he left the

boots in the vestibule, and went his way again barefooted. If anyone had glanced out of the window in the autumn, and especially when the first morning frosts were setting in, he could have seen all the house-serfs taking such leaps as are hardly made on the stage by the most accomplished dancers.

"Look there, my good fellow, what a face!" said Pliushkin to Tchitchikoff, pointing at Proshka's countenance. "Stupid, truly, like a block of wood; but only try to lay anything down for a minute, and he will steal it! Well, what have you come for, you fool—tell me, eh?" Here a brief silence ensued.

"Bring the samovar, do you hear?" added Pliushkin at last. "And here, take this key, and give it to Mavra, so that she may go to the storeroom. There, on the shelf, is the sugar off the Easter-cake which Alexandra Stepanovna brought me—let her bring it here for our tea. Stop! where are you going, you fool?—yes, you utter fool! Is the Fiend in your legs, busy scratching you? Listen first. The upper part of the sugar is probably spoilt, so let it be scraped off with a knife. And don't you throw any of it away, but carry it to the fowl-house. And see to it that you don't go into the storehouse, my boy. If you do, do you know what will happen? You will get a taste of a birch rod, so that, if you have a capital appetite now, you'll have a better one then. Just try to go into the storehouse! I shall look out of the window in the meanwhile. He cannot be trusted in anything," continued Pliushkin, turning to Tchitchikoff, after Proshka had taken himself off, in company with his boots.

Then he began to gaze suspiciously at our friend. Such remarkable magnanimity began to appear incredible to him; and he said to himself, "After all, the devil only knows, he may be simply a braggart, like most spendthrifts! He will lie and lie, just for the sake of talking, and then he will go off!" As a measure of precaution, therefore, and desirous of putting our hero to a further test, he said that it would not be a bad idea to draw up the deed of sale as speedily as possible: for one cannot depend upon man, you know; to-day he is alive, and to-morrow God knows where.

Tchitchikoff expressed his readiness to do so on the instant, and merely required the list of serfs. This reassured Pliushkin. It was evident that he had made up his mind to something; and in fact, taking his keys, he approached the sideboard, and having opened the door, he fumbled for a long time among the cups and glasses, and finally exclaimed, "Well, I can't find it. But I had some splendid liquor, if it has not all been drunk; but my people are such thieves. However, perhaps this is it." Tchitchikoff now saw that he held a decanter covered with dust. "My deceased wife made this," continued Pliushkin. "That rascally housekeeper meant to spoil it completely, and she did not even cork it up, the beast! Beetles and all sorts of rubbish

made their way into it; but I took all the filth out, and now it is perfectly clean, and I will pour you out a glass."

However, Tchitchikoff made an effort to refuse the liquor, saying that he had already eaten and drunk.

"You have already eaten and drunk?" said Pliushkin. "Yes, of course; one recognises a man who belongs to good society wherever one meets him. He does not go about asking for things, but is satisfied with what he takes at home. But when some good-for-nothing thief comes along, you may feed him as much as you like, he'll never refuse. Why, there's the captain: he comes here. 'Dear uncle,' says he, 'give me something to eat!' And I'm his uncle about as much as he is my grandfather. Probably he has nothing to eat at home, and so he prowls about the country. Yes, surely you will need the list of all those lazy dogs. Certainly. As soon as I knew about their death, I wrote their names down on a special piece of paper, in order that I might have them struck out at the first revision."

Pliushkin now put on his spectacles, and began to rummage among his papers. As he untied each bundle, he treated his guest to such a cloud of dust that the latter sneezed. At last he drew out a paper which was covered with writing. The names of the serfs were sprinkled all over it as thickly as flies. They were of all sorts: Paramanoffs and Pimenoffs, and Pantaleimonoffs, and even a certain Grigoriy Go-but-you-won't-get-there. In all, there were over one hundred and twenty. Tchitchikoff smiled at the sight of so many names. Having placed the list in his pocket, he remarked to Pliushkin that he should be obliged to go to town in order to complete the bill of sale.

"To town? But why? And how can I leave my house? Why, all my people are either thieves or rogues! They would plunder me so thoroughly in one day that I should not even have a nail left to hang my caftan on."

"Then, you haven't any acquaintance in town?"

"What acquaintances? All my acquaintances have died, or have dropped me. Ah, my dear fellow! as for an acquaintance—— But stop, I have one," he exclaimed. "Why, the president of the court himself is a friend of mine! He has never been here to visit me in my old age! Still, how could I help knowing him? We were brought up together, and used to play together. Know him, indeed! He's an old friend! Would it not do to write to him?"

"Write to him by all means."

"Why not? Such an old friend! We were friends at school."

And across the old fellow's wooden face there suddenly flashed a ray of light, which expressed, not feeling, but the pale reflection of a feeling: an apparition, similar to the sudden appearance of a

drowning man, which appearance elicits a joyous shout from the crowd assembled on the shore. But in vain do the rejoicing brothers and sisters cast a rope from the bank, and wait to see whether he will not rise once more; whether his hands are exhausted with his struggles or not, this apparition is the last. He is not seen again, and the calm surface of the unresponsive fluid seems still more terrible and more desolate than before. Thus Pliushkin's face, after the momentary feeling which had flashed across it, became more unfeeling and expressionless than ever.

"There was a quarter of a sheet of clean paper lying on the table," said he, "but I don't know what has become of it: my people are such worthless creatures." Hereupon he began to peer about under the table, poked about everywhere, and finally screamed, "Mavra! hey, Mavra!" At his call a woman made her appearance carrying a plate, upon which lay the sugar with which the reader is already acquainted; and a long discussion took place between them.

"What have you done with the paper, you thief?"

"By Heavens, master, I have seen nothing, except the scrap with which you covered the wineglass!"

"Why, I can see by your eyes that you have made away with it."

"But why should I have made away with it? It's of no use to me: I don't know how to read or write."

"You lie! you have carried it to the sacristan: he has a smattering of knowledge, as I know, and you have carried it off to him."

"The sacristan can get paper for himself if he wants it. He has never laid eyes on your scrap."

"Just wait; the fiends will toast you on a gridiron for this, on the day of judgment! You'll see how they will roast you."

"But what will they roast me for, when I have not even taken your paper in my hands? I may have other weaknesses, but no one ever accused me of thieving before."

"Oh, won't the devils roast you, though! They will say, 'Take that, you wretched creature, for deceiving your master!' Yes, they will toast you on red-hot bars!"

"And I shall say, 'There's no reason for it! by Heaven, there's none! I did not take it.' Why, there it lies on the table. You are always accusing us wrongfully!"

Indeed, Pliushkin now perceived the bit of paper, and paused for an instant, chewing, as it were, till he finally ejaculated, "Well, what did you flare up so for? Hey, what a touchy creature she is! Say but one word to her, and she'll answer you back with ten. Go and fetch a taper to seal a letter. But hold! don't bring a tallow candle: tallow melts easily; it burns out, and is a dead loss: fetch me a pine-knot!"

Mavra went out: and Pliushkin, seating himself in an arm-chair, and taking a pen, turned the paper about for a long time

in every direction, to see whether he could not contrive to cut it in two, but at length he convinced himself that this was impossible, so he dipped his pen into the ink-bottle, containing some mouldy liquid, together with a multitude of dead flies, and began to write, each word being finely penned and each line following close upon the other. He was already regretfully reflecting that there would still remain a large expanse of unused paper.

To such meanness, pettiness, baseness, could this man descend, to such an extent could he change! Does this resemble the truth, the reader may ask? Well, it is very likely the truth: it may very well happen with a man. The fiery youth of to-day would start back in horror if he were shown the portrait of himself in his old age. So take with you on your road, as you leave behind you the soft years of youth and emerge into manhood, which renders one hard and surly—take with you all your human impulses, don't leave them on the way: you can never find them again later on if they are once relinquished. Stern and terrible old age, as it advances, will return you nothing, give you nothing back!

"And do you know of any of your friends who would like to buy some absconding serfs?" said Pliushkin, folding his letter.

"Have you any serfs who have absconded?" asked Tchitchikoff quickly.

"That's the very point: I have. My son-in-law made some inquiries, and it appeared that no trace of them could be found: but he's a military man; he's a master hand at stamping about in his spurs, but when it comes to troubling himself about legal matters——"

"How many of them were there?"

"They would amount to seventy in all."

"No!"

"By Heaven, it is true! Why, there isn't a year but what they run away from me. The common people are great gluttons, and have acquired a habit, out of sheer idleness, of stuffing themselves on festival days; and I myself have nothing to eat. Well, I would take anything that I might be offered for the ones who have run away. So you had better advise your friend: if he only found ten of them, he would make a deal of money. A soul on the census list is worth fifty roubles, you know."

"No, we won't let my friend have so much as a smell of them," said Tchitchikoff to himself, and then he proceeded to explain that no such friend was to be found, that the expenses of such an undertaking would amount to so much that one would have to cut the skirts off one's own caftan to satisfy the judges and the lawyers; however, out of sympathy, he was ready to give—well, it was such a trifle, that it was not worth mentioning."

"But how much would you give?" asked Pliushkin, at once turning into a Jew: his hands trembled like quicksilver.

"I would give twenty-five copecks for each soul."

"And how would you pay—in ready money?"

"Yes, cash on the spot."

"But, my good fellow, in consideration of my poverty, you might at least give me forty copecks apiece."

"My most respected sir," replied Tchitchikoff, "I would pay not only forty copecks, but five hundred roubles, apiece. I would pay that amount gladly, because I see that a highly respected, good old man is suffering on account of his generosity."

"By Heaven, it is so! By Heaven, you are right!" said Pliushkin, hanging his head, and then swaying it compassionately from side to side. "It's all out of generosity."

"Well, do you see? I understood your character in an instant. So, why should not I give five hundred roubles a soul for them? But I am not in a position to do it, unfortunately. I am willing to add five copecks if you like, so that each soul would thus be reckoned at thirty copecks."

"Well, my good fellow, as you please; but add at least a couple of copecks."

"I will say two copecks more, then. How many have you? I think you said—seventy?"

"No, they will mount up to seventy-eight in all."

"Seventy-eight, seventy-eight, at thirty-two copecks a soul—that will be——" Here our hero reflected for an instant, no longer, and then said, "That will be twenty-four roubles and ninety-six copecks." He was strong in arithmetic. He immediately made Pliushkin write out a list of the serfs who had absconded, and gave him the money, which the latter took in both hands, and carried to his desk, with as much caution as though it had been some sort of liquid, and as if he feared each moment that he might spill it. On arriving at the desk, he placed the money with extreme care in one of the small compartments, where it was probably destined to remain interred until Father Karp and Father Polykarp, the two popes of his village, were called upon to bury him—to the indescribable joy of his son-in-law and daughter, and possibly also of the captain who counted himself as a relative. Having put the money away, Pliushkin seated himself in his arm-chair, and seemed incapable of finding any other subject of conversation.

"What! are you preparing to go already?" said he, perceiving a slight movement which Tchitchikoff made, simply with the object of getting his handkerchief out of his pocket.

This question reminded our hero that there was really no occasion for further delay. "Yes: it is time for me to go!" he exclaimed, taking up his cap.

"Won't you drink a cup of tea?"

"No: it will be better to let the tea wait until another time."

"How is that? I have ordered the samovar. However, to tell the truth, I am not very fond of tea myself. It's an expensive beverage; and, besides, the price of sugar has risen most terribly.

Proshka, we don't need the samovar. Carry the sugar back to Mavra, do you hear? Let it be put back in the same place—or no, give it here: I will take it back myself. Farewell, my dear fellow"—this to Tchitchikoff, "and may God bless you! And you will hand my letter to the president of the court. Yes, let him read it: he is an old acquaintance of mine. Why, we were brought up together!"

Thereupon, this extraordinary apparition, this little, withered-up old man, conducted our hero into the yard, after which he ordered the gates to be instantly locked. Then he went the round of his storehouses, in order to see whether the night watchmen were at their posts, ready to beat with their wooden shovels on empty casks in lieu of sheet-iron. Then he peeped into the kitchen, where, under the pretext of seeing whether the servants' food was good, he partook heartily of some cabbage soup and groats; and, finally, having upbraided everyone of them for thieving and evil conduct, he returned to his own room. When he was alone, he even began to meditate how he might requite his visitor for his, in fact, unbounded magnanimity. "I will give him," said he, "my watch. It is a very good silver watch, none of your brass or pinchbeck affairs. It's somewhat out of order, but he can have it set to rights for himself. He is still a young man, and will need a watch in order to please his bride. Or no," he added, after some thought, "it will be better to bequeath it to him after my death, in my will, as a remembrance."

But our hero was in the most cheerful possible frame of mind, even without the watch. Such an unexpected acquisition as he had made was a perfect godsend, say what you like; it was not only dead souls, but fugitive ones into the bargain, and to the number of over two hundred! He had certainly felt, as he drove up to Pliushkin's village, that he should reap some sort of a harvest; but he had by no means expected so bountiful a one. So all along the road he was extremely merry. It was already perfectly dark when they arrived at the inn in the town. There Tchitchikoff was met by his servant Petrushka, who held up the skirt of his surtout with one hand—for he did not like to have his coat-tails flying—while with the other he assisted his master to alight from the britchka. The waiter also ran out, with a candle in his hand, and a napkin over his arm. Whether Petrushka was rejoiced at the arrival of his master is not known. At all events, he exchanged a wink with Selifan; and his ordinarily surly countenance seemed on this occasion to brighten up a little.

"You have been pleased to stay away a long time," said the waiter, as he lighted our hero up the staircase.

"Yes," answered Tchitchikoff, as he set foot on the stairs. "Well, and how are you?"

"Very well, thanks be to God," replied the waiter, bowing.

"Some lieutenant or other arrived yesterday, and engaged number sixteen, next to your room."

"A lieutenant?"

"I don't know who he is; but he comes from Ryazan, and has some brown horses."

"Good, good! Well, behave yourself as well in future," said Tchitchikoff, and he then went to his room. On entering the ante-chamber he sniffed, and remarked to Petrushka, "You might at least have opened the windows while I was away!"

"I did open them," said Petrushka; but he was lying.

His master was perfectly well aware of that, but he did not care to retort. He felt very much fatigued after the journey which he had taken. After partaking of the lightest kind of a supper—merely a sucking-pig—he immediately undressed, and, stowing himself away beneath the coverlet, he fell into a deep, sound sleep. Indeed, he slept in a wonderful way, as only those happy beings sleep who know nothing of either nightmares or fleas, and who are not given to cudgelling their brains.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE TRIBUNALS AND THE POLICE

ON the next morning when our hero awoke he stretched out his arms and legs, and felt that he had had a good rest. After lying for a couple of minutes on his back, he snapped his fingers, and recalled with a smile that he now owned nearly four hundred souls. Thereupon he leapt from his bed, and began to dress, without even looking at his face, of which he was sincerely fond, and in which he seemed to find the chin the most attractive feature, for he frequently praised it in the presence of his friends, especially if they chanced to be present while he was shaving. "Look here," he generally said, "see what a chin I have: it is perfectly round."

However, now he glanced neither at his chin nor at his nose, but straightway put on his morocco leather boots with ornaments of many colours, such as the town of Torzhok skilfully supplies, and then in Scottish fashion, clad only in his shirt, and forgetful of his dignity and his respectable middle age, he executed a couple of leaps about the room, cracking his heels very cleverly. Finally he set to work: he rubbed his hands before his dressing-case with as much satisfaction as an incorruptible district judge feels when he has successfully completed a judicial investigation. He was anxious to settle matters at once, and would not allow of any delay. He decided to draw up the bills of sale himself, in order that he might not be obliged to pay any lawyer. He was perfectly well acquainted with the legal formulas, so he boldly began writing in large letters, "Year one thousand eight hundred and so-and-so"; and then, in smaller letters he added "Landowner so-and-so," and all the rest that was necessary, so that in a couple of hours everything was ready.

When he glanced after this at the various lists of moujiks who had actually been alive once upon a time—who had toiled, and got drunk, and acted as izvoshtchiks, had cheated their masters, or possibly had simply been good moujiks in their way, a certain feeling overpowered him, which was strange and incomprehensible, even to himself. Each one of the lists seemed to possess a special character; and, more than that, the moujiks themselves seemed to have acquired a special character. Nearly all the moujiks which had belonged to Madame Korobotchka

seemed to have supplementary names and nicknames. Pliushkin's list was distinguished by brevity of style; often only the first syllables of the men's names and surnames were given, and these were followed by a couple of dots. On the other hand, Sobakevitch's list was remarkable for its fulness and minuteness of detail; not a single one of any of the moujiks' qualities was omitted. Of one it was said, "A good cabinet-maker"; to the name of another was appended the remark, "He is intelligent, and does not get drunk." Such facts were also indicated as who were the men's mothers and fathers, and what the conduct of the parents had been. Against the name of one, a certain Fedotoff, there was written, "His father is not known, but his mother was the housemaid Kepitolina; however, he is of a good disposition, and not a thief." All these details contributed a peculiar freshness to the list; it seemed as though these moujiks had been alive only the day before. After indulging in a long look at their names, Tchitchikoff ejaculated with a sigh, "My good fellows! how many there are of you packed in here! What did you do when you were alive? Answer me, beloved of my heart! How did you get along?" This led him to many reflections as to the lives led by the departed moujiks, and the time rapidly slipped away. "Heigho! twelve o'clock!" he said at last, glancing at his watch. "Why have I been dawdling here all this time? I might have finished my business, and instead of that I first wasted time in foolish thoughts. Well, I am a fool."

Having made this remark he exchanged his Scottish costume for one patronised by civilised Europeans, drew the buckle of his waistcoat as tightly as possible, sprinkled himself with *eau-de-Cologne*, took his cap in his hand and his papers under his arm, and set out for the city court-house to complete the sales.

He walked along at a rapid pace, for he felt that he should feel awkward and uneasy until everything was finished. He had not been long in the street, and he was still thinking of all these matters, and at the same time drawing his bearskin cloak, covered with light-brown cloth, over his shoulders, when at a turn in the lane he came in contact with a gentleman, also clad in a bearskin cloak, covered with light-brown cloth, and having a warm cap with ear-pieces on his head. The gentleman uttered an exclamation; it was Maniloff. They immediately clasped each other in a close embrace, and stood in the street in that attitude for fully five minutes. Their kisses were so vigorous that their front teeth ached for the whole day afterwards, and Maniloff's joy, especially, was so great, that nothing seemed left of his face but his nose and lips; his eyes disappeared completely. He held Tchitchikoff's hand in both of his own for a quarter of an hour, and made it frightfully warm. Then he related in the most delicate and agreeable terms how he had come to town on purpose to embrace Pavel Ivanovitch, and his

speech concluded with a compliment such as is only addressed as a rule to a young girl, with whom one is on the point of dancing. Tchitchikoff had already opened his mouth without knowing how to thank Maniloff; but all at once the latter pulled a roll of paper, tied with a narrow pink ribbon, from beneath his cloak.

"What is this?" asked our hero, taking the paper.

"A list of the moujiks."

"Ah!" Then Tchitchikoff unrolled it, ran his eyes over it, and was amazed at the clearness and elegance of the writing. "This is splendidly done," said he; "it will not be necessary to copy it. There is even a border all round it. Who did this border so tastefully?"

"Well, you ought not to ask me. It was my wife."

"Ah, good Heavens! I am really ashamed that she should have taken so much trouble."

"There is no such thing as trouble, when Pavel Ivanovitch is in question."

Tchitchikoff made a bow of gratitude. On learning that he was on his way to the court-house, to complete the deed of sale, Maniloff expressed his readiness to accompany him.

The friends locked arms and set off together. At every elevation, however light, at every little rise of ground or step, Maniloff supported Tchitchikoff, and almost lifted him up by his arm, accompanying the action with an agreeable smile and the remark that he would by no means suffer Pavel Ivanovitch to hurt his little feet. Tchitchikoff felt conscience-stricken, since he did not know how to return his thanks, though he was well aware that he was rather heavy. By dint of mutual assistance, they finally reached the market-place, where the court-house was situated, a large three-storey stone building, as white as chalk, in allusion, probably, to the purity of soul prevailing in the public offices installed within it.

The friends did not walk, but ran, up the staircase. Tchitchikoff, not caring to let Maniloff have the trouble of helping him, quickened his pace; and Maniloff, on his side, flew on in advance, in order not to allow Tchitchikoff to get the advantage of him, so that they both were very much out of breath when they finally arrived in a dark corridor. Neither in this place nor in the rooms around was any cleanliness at all conspicuous. Our heroes espied a great many documents, both rough drafts and clean copies, clerks with bent heads, broad necks, swallow-tailed coats, surtouts of provincial cut, and even one in a simple light grey round jacket, which stood out sharply among the rest, and whose owner, with his head on one side, and almost resting on the paper, was writing out either a protocol about the seizure of some land, or else the description of an estate which had been suddenly seized by some land-grabber. Then they heard exclamations and orders given in a hoarse voice: "Matter No. 368, if you please, Fedosiy Fedosievitch!" Next a scolding

remark: "You are always carrying off the stopper of the court ink-bottle!" While at times a more commanding voice, belonging probably to one of the superior officials, rang out imperiously, "There, copy that, and look sharp; if you don't, your boots shall be taken off your feet, and you shall sit in my office without food for six days!"

The noise made by the pens as they went scratch, scratch, was very great, and resembled that of several telyégas loaded with brushwood passing through a forest, where the dry leaves lay fully a quarter of an arshin* high.

Tchitchikoff and Maniloff entered the first department, where there sat two officials, of whom our hero inquired—"Will you be kind enough to tell us where is the proper office for recording the sales of serfs?"

"What do you want?" said both functionaries, turning round.

"I want to have a deed of sale registered."

"What have you been buying?"

"I wish to know first of all where the serf department is—here, or where?"

"Tell us first what you have bought, and what price you have paid, and then we will tell you where to go; but it's impossible for us to do so otherwise."

Tchitchikoff immediately perceived that these officials were simply inquisitive young fellows who unduly assumed an air of importance.

"Listen," said he; "I know perfectly well that all affairs connected with serfs, no matter what the price paid for them may be, are transacted in one place, and I therefore beg of you to show us the department; if you do not know what goes on here about you, we will inquire of someone else."

To this the functionaries made no reply: one of them merely pointed with his finger to a corner of the room, where there sat an old man docketing some papers. Tchitchikoff made his way straight up to him. The old man was greatly absorbed in his work.

"Permit me to inquire," said Tchitchikoff with a bow, "whether this is the place for matters connected with sale of serfs?"

The old man raised his eyes and replied, "No, this is not the place for serf-sales."

"Where is it, then?"

"In the serf department."

"And where is the serf department?"

"Ivan Antonovitch has charge of it."

"And where is Ivan Antonovitch?"

The old man pointed with his finger to another corner of the room, and Tchitchikoff and Maniloff betook themselves to Ivan Antonovitch. Ivan Antonovitch had already cast a glance

* Seven inches.

behind him and taken a stealthy survey of them; but he now busied himself more intently than ever with his writing.

"Permit me to inquire," said Tchitchikoff with a bow, "whether this is the place for the transaction of business connected with the sale of serfs?"

Ivan Antonovitch pretended not to hear him, and, without vouchsafing any reply, became absorbed in his papers. It at once became apparent that he had attained to years of discretion—in fact he seemed to be well past forty. His hair was black and thick, and he had one of those faces which is designated in common life as a "jug phiz."

"Allow me to inquire whether this is the serf department?" repeated Tchitchikoff.

"Yes," said Ivan Antonovitch, who just turned his jug face round, and then went on with his writing.

"Well, this is my business. I have purchased some peasants for exportation from various proprietors in this district. I have the deeds of sale; all that remains is to register them."

"Are the vendors present?"

"Some are here, and from the others I have written authority."

"Have you brought your drafts of the bills of sale?"

"Yes, I have. I should like to know—I am in somewhat of a hurry—if the business could not be finished to-day?"

"Oh, to-day! that's impossible," said Ivan Antonovitch. "Inquiries must first be instituted as to whether there is anything illegal about these matters."

"As far as that is concerned, and in order that the affair may be expedited, I may mention that Ivan Grigorievitch, the President of the Court, is a great friend of mine."

"Yes; but Ivan Grigorievitch is not the only person in the world to be considered; there are others," said Ivan Antonovitch grimly.

Tchitchikoff understood the hint conveyed by Ivan Antonovitch, and so he said, "The others will not be left dissatisfied. I have been in the service myself; I know how the business is managed."

"Go to Ivan Grigorievitch," said Ivan Antonovitch, in a somewhat mollified voice. "Let him give orders to the proper persons; but the matter does not depend on us."

Tchitchikoff, pulling a bank-note from his pocket, laid it before Ivan Antonovitch, who did not notice it in the least, though he immediately covered it with a book. Tchitchikoff was about to point it out to him; but Ivan Antonovitch let it be understood, by a motion of his head, that it was not necessary for him to do so.

"There, that fellow will conduct you to the court-room," the official next said, nodding his head. A clerk with frayed sleeves and patched trousers guided our friends, as Virgil guided Dante in the olden days, taking them straight to the court-room,

where in an ample arm-chair, and behind two ponderous books and a mirror of the laws, sat the president in state, like the sun. He was not alone, for beside him sat Sobakevitch, entirely concealed by the zertzalo.* The entrance of the visitors elicited an exclamation, and the presidential chair was shoved back. Sobakevitch also rose from his seat. The president received Tchitchikoff into his embrace, and the audience-chamber resounded with kisses, after which the two friends inquired about each other's health. It then appeared that they both had the back-ache, which was immediately attributed to their sedentary life. The president, it seemed, had already been informed of the purchases by Sobakevitch, for he immediately began to congratulate our hero, which threw him into some confusion at first, especially when he perceived that Sobakevitch and Maniloff, two of the persons with whom the business had been privately transacted, now stood face to face. However, he thanked the president, and then turning to Sobakevitch, he inquired, "And how is your health?"

"Glory to God, I do not complain," said Sobakevitch. And, in fact, he had nothing to complain of. Iron would sooner have taken cold or caught a cough than this marvellously well constituted landowner.

"Yes, you have always gloried in your health," said the president; "and your late father also was a strong man."

"Yes, he went bear-hunting alone," replied Sobakevitch.

"But it seems to me," said the president, "that you also could overthrow a bear if you chose to go out and encounter him."

"No, I could not throw him," answered Sobakevitch. "My father was much stronger than I am." And he continued, with a sigh, "No, there are no such people left now. Here's my life, for example. What sort of a life is it? It is nothing but——"

"In what respect is not your life agreeable?" said the president.

"It's not good, not good!" said Sobakevitch, shaking his head. "Judge for yourself, Ivan Grigorievitch. I have lived for fifty years and I have never once been ill; I have never had so much as a headache or an ulcer or a boil. Now that is not a good omen. Some time or other I shall have to pay for all this!" and hereupon Sobakevitch became plunged into profound melancholy.

"Eh, what a man!" thought Tchitchikoff and the president simultaneously. "What a thing he has hit upon to fret about!"

"I have a little note for you," said Tchitchikoff, pulling Pliushkin's letter out of his pocket.

* *Zertzalo.* A small, triangular glass case, containing the three ukases of Peter the Great, with the imperial eagle. This stands on the table of every court-room in Russia.

"From whom?" said the president. And breaking the seal, he exclaimed, "Ah! from Pliushkin. Is he still vegetating on in this world? That's a case of fate. He used to be the most sensible, the wealthiest of men. But now——"

"He's a dog!" said Sobakevitch; "a scoundrel! He has starved nearly all his people to death."

"Certainly, certainly," said the president, when he had finished reading the letter. "I am ready to be his agent. When do you wish to complete the sale—now, or later on?"

"Now," said Tchitchikoff; "I should like it to be to-day, if possible, for I wish to go out of town to-morrow. I have brought the draft bills of sale with me."

"That is all right, only, whatever may be your wishes in the matter, we shall not let you leave us so soon. The deeds of sale will be completed to-day, but you must remain with us. I will give the necessary orders immediately," added the president; and he opened the door to the offices, which were filled with functionaries, who resembled industrious bees, scattered over their comb—if, indeed, a honeycomb can be compared to government offices. "Is Ivan Antonovitch here?" he asked.

"Yes," replied a voice within.

"Send him here."

Ivan Antonovitch, the man with the jug-like face, presented himself in the audience-chamber, and bowed respectfully.

"Here," said Ivan Grigorievitch, "take all these bills of the sale of serfs, and have them——"

"And don't forget, Ivan Grigorievitch," broke in Sobakevitch, "that at least two witnesses will be required on both sides. Send to the procurator at once; he is a man of leisure, and is probably at home. Lawyer Zalotukha, the greatest robber on earth, does all his work for him. The inspector of the Medical Institute—he's a gentleman of leisure, too, and is probably at home, if he has not gone off somewhere to play at cards. But there are plenty who are nearer at hand: Trukhatchevsky, Byegushkin—they are all useless encumberers of the earth!"

"Exactly, exactly!" said the president; and he immediately despatched a clerk in search of all of them.

"I must also request you," said Tchitchikoff, "to send for the representative of a lady landowner, with whom I have concluded a purchase—the son of the protopope Father Kirill; he serves under you."

"Certainly; we'll send for him," said the president. "Everything shall be done, and you need not give anything to the officials; that I must beg of you. My friends must not pay." So saying, he immediately gave some orders to Ivan Antonovitch, which were evidently displeasing to the latter. The deeds seemed to produce a favourable impression on the president, especially when he perceived that the purchases were for a large number of serfs, who must be worth fully a hundred thousand roubles. He looked

Tchitchikoff in the eye for several minutes, with an expression of the greatest satisfaction, and at length remarked, "Well, really! This is the way to do things, Pavel Ivanovitch. So you have acquired all these?"

"Yes," replied Tchitchikoff.

"It's a fine transaction; truly, a fine piece of business."

"Yes; I myself know that a finer piece of business could not be undertaken. At all events a man's object in living remains undefined if he does not set his feet firmly on a durable foundation, in place of following the chimera of youth." Here our friend very opportunely introduced some strictures upon young men for indulging in Liberalism, and so on. But it was worthy of note that there was a certain lack of firmness in his own words, as though he were saying to himself all the while, "Eh, my good fellow? you are lying, and stoutly lying, too!" He did not even glance at Sobakevitch and Maniloff, for fear of detecting something or other on their faces. But his fears were groundless: Sobakevitch's face never moved; and Maniloff, delighted with this discourse, only nodded his head approvingly as he fell into that attitude which an admirer of music assumes when a songstress has outdone a fiddle, piping such a shrill note that even a bird could not sing it.

"Why don't you tell Ivan Grigorievitch," now called out Sobakevitch, "just what you have bought? And you, Ivan Grigorievitch, why don't you ask him what sort of an acquisition he has made? Such people! Simply worth their weight in gold! Why, I have sold him my carriage-maker, Mikhyeff!"

"No; you haven't sold Mikhyeff, though?" said the president. "I knew that carriage-maker, Mikhyeff; he was a capital workman; he repaired a drozhky for me once. Only, excuse me, how is it? You certainly told me that he was dead."

"What! Mikhyeff dead?" said Sobakevitch, not in the least disconcerted. "It was his brother who died; but he's very much alive, and in better health than ever. Only a few days ago he began to make me a britchka, such as you can't get made even in Moscow."

"Yes, Mikhyeff is a capital workman," said the president, "and I am even surprised that you could part with him."

"Yes, and not Mikhyeff only, but Cork Stepan, the carpenter; Milushkin, the brickmaker; Maksim Telyatnikoff, the shoemaker—they are all gone; I've sold them all." And when the president inquired why he had sold them, since they were all men who were indispensable about a house, being capital artisans, Sobakevitch replied, with a wave of his hand, "Ah! well, the fancy struck me. 'Come,' I said to myself, 'I'll sell them'; and so I did, in a freak." Thereupon he hung his head, as though he repented of his deed, and added, "Here I am, a grey-haired man, and I haven't acquired any common sense to this day."

"But excuse me, Pavel Ivanovitch," said the president, "how

does it come that you are purchasing serfs without land? Are they for colonisation?"

"Yes, for colonisation."

"Oh, well! if they are for colonising purposes, it's quite a different matter; and in what locality?"

"The locality. Oh! in the Khersonese Government."

"Oh, the land is excellent there!" said the president, and he expressed himself in very laudatory terms with regard to the growth of the grass there.

"And have you a sufficient amount of land?"

"I have as much as is necessary for the serfs which I have bought."

"Is there a river or a pond?"

"A river. And there is a pond besides." After saying this, Tchitchikoff glanced, unintentionally, at Sobakevitch; and, although Sobakevitch was as stolid as ever, it seemed to him as though there were written on his face, "Oh, you're lying! You haven't any river, or pond, or land, at all!"

During this conversation, the witnesses began to make their appearance—the blinking procurator, who is already known to the reader; the inspector of the Medical Institute, Trukhatchevsky, Byegushkin, and the other "encumberers of the earth," as Sobakevitch expressed it. Many of them were entirely unknown to Tchitchikoff. Not only was the son of the protopope, Father Kirill, fetched, but even the protopope himself. Each of the witnesses signed with all his names and titles: some in a reversed handwriting; some in a slanting hand; some simply upside down—introducing such letters as were surely never yet beheld in the Russian alphabet. Our well-known Ivan Antonovitch did his work very briskly. The deeds of sale were recorded, the dates were entered, everything was copied in the books, and, when it was all done, there was a charge of one half-rouble per cent., for the registration, to be paid. However Tchitchikoff disbursed even less, for the president ordered that only one-half of the tax should be demanded of him; and the other half was, in some manner, transferred to the account of another purchase.

"So now," said the president, when all was over, "it only remains for us to seal the contracts with a convivial glass."

"I am ready," said Tchitchikoff. "It only depends on you to name a time. It would be a sin on my part if I did not uncork two or three bottles of foaming wine for such an agreeable company."

"No; you have not taken the matter aright. We are going to provide the foaming material ourselves," said the president. "It is an obligation: it is our duty. You are our guest: we must entertain you. Do you know what, gentlemen? This is what we will do: we will all of us, as many as there are here present, go to the chief of police's; he's a wonderful fellow!

It will only take him a minute to pass along through the fish-market and look at the wine merchants, and you know how we shall fare then! And we'll also have a little whist-party to celebrate this occasion."

No one could refuse such a proposition. The witnesses felt an appetite at the very mention of the fish-market: they all instantly took up their caps and hats, and the sitting of the court was at an end. When they passed through the offices, Ivan Antonovitch—he of the jug face—said softly to Tchitchikoff, as he made his bow, "You have bought a hundred thousand roubles' worth of peasants, and yet you have only given me one white bank-note for my labour."

"Yes; and what are peasants, after all?" Tchitchikoff answered him in a corresponding whisper; "a very worthless and most insignificant class of people, and not worth half that."

Ivan Antonovitch then understood that his visitor was of an uncompromising character, and would not give him any more.

The visitors finally arrived at the chief of police's house in a body. This chief of police really was a wonderful man. As soon as he learned the state of affairs, he called to the captain of the district, a bold young fellow in lacquered cavalry-boots, and whispered a couple of words in his ear, adding, "Do you understand?" And then while the guests were playing whist with ardour in one room, there appeared on the table in another some sturgeon, sterlet, salmon, sveriuga,* pressed caviar, salted caviar, herrings, patties, cheese, smoked tongues, and so on; all of which came from the market. Next appeared a contribution from the officials' own quarters—a boar's head, a patty made out of a nine-pood sturgeon, another pasty of mushrooms, some gingerbread, butter-cakes, and *vzvarenitza*.†

The chief of police was a sort of father and benefactor to the town. He was as much at home among the citizens as in his own family, and he visited the shops and bazaars and disposed of their contents as if they were his own private storerooms.

On perceiving that the luncheon was ready, this wonderful official proposed to his guests that they should finish their game of whist after the meal; and they all betook themselves to the adjoining room, whence an odour which tickled their nostrils agreeably had long since been issuing. Sobakevitch had peeped through the doorway a long while before, and had caught sight of the sturgeon reposing on a huge platter in the distance. When each of the guests had drunk a glass of vodka of the olive-green hue of those Siberian stones from which seals are cut in Russia, they approached the table with their forks, and began to exhibit their characters and their predilections, as the saying is; some attacking the caviar, others the salmon, and others the cheese.

Sobakevitch, paying no heed to any of these trifles, attached

* A fish of the sturgeon species.
† A spiced drink made of beer, brandy, and mead.

himself to the sturgeon, and in a little more than a quarter of an hour, while the rest were eating, drinking, and conversing, he completely made away with it, so that when the chief of police happened to remember it, and said to his guests, "And what do you think of that product of nature, gentlemen?" and turned towards it with his fork upraised, he saw that nothing was left of his product of nature except its tail. But Sobakevitch kept quiet, as though it were not his doing; and, marching up to the dish which was farthest off, he thrust his fork into a small dried fish. After that he seated himself in an arm-chair, and neither ate nor drank any more, but merely screwed up his eyes and blinked.

The chief of police was in no wise sparing of his wine, and there was no end to the toasts. The first one was drunk, as the reader may have divined, to the health of the new landowner in the Khersonese, and then to the welfare of his serfs and to their successful removal; then to the health of his future beautiful wife, which evoked a pleasant smile on the lips of our hero. They surrounded him on all sides, and began to entreat him to remain at least two weeks longer in the town. "No, Pavel Ivanovitch! You may say what you like, you shall stay a while with us! We'll marry you off!—We will marry him, won't we, Ivan Grigorievitch?"

"We'll marry him! we'll marry him!" The president of the court caught up the refrain. "You may defend yourself with hands and feet, but we'll marry you all the same," he said. "Now, my dear fellow, you have come here, and you won't have any reason to complain. We are not fond of jesting."

"What! Why should I resist with hands and feet?" said Tchitchikoff, laughing. "Marriage is not such a thing that one—— However there would have to be a bride."

"A bride will be provided. Why not? You shall have everything—everything that you wish!"

"And if——"

"Bravo! he will stay!" they all exclaimed. "Viva, hurrah! Pavel Ivanovitch! Hurrah!" And they all crowded round him to touch his glass with those which they held in their hands. Tchitchikoff clinked glasses with all. "Ah! Ah! once more!" exclaimed the more enthusiastic; and again they clinked. Then they came up to touch glasses a third time, and for the third time they clinked. All had become extremely merry in a very short space of time. The president, who was a very charming man when he got excited, embraced Tchitchikoff several times, exclaiming, in the fulness of his heart, "My soul! my mamma!" and then cracking his fingers, he even began to dance round our hero, humming the well-known song, "Ah! thou art so nice, so nice, thou Komarinsk moujik!"

After the champagne, they opened some Hungarian wine, which raised their spirits to a still higher level, and rendered

them extremely lively. They had forgotten all about their whist. They asked questions, laughed and talked about everything—about politics, and even about military matters; freely expressing sentiments for which they would have whipped their children at another time. They settled a multitude of the most difficult questions. Tchitchikoff had never found himself in such a merry mood. He fancied that he was actually a landowner in the Khersonese, and he talked about various improvements—about farming; about the happiness and bliss of two souls living in mutual affinity; and he began to recite to Sobakevitch, Werther's message to Charlotte, in verse; his friend blinking as he sat in his arm-chair, for after eating all that sturgeon he felt strongly inclined to sleep. However, Tchitchikoff finally became conscious that he was growing too communicative; he asked for a carriage, and obtained the loan of the procurator's drozhky. The coachman of this vehicle was an experienced young fellow, as soon became apparent on the road; for he drove with one hand, and, thrusting the other behind him, supported our hero with it. In this manner was Tchitchikoff conveyed in the procurator's drozhky to his inn, where he still continued to talk all sorts of nonsense for a long while, chatting about a golden-haired bride with rosy cheeks, and a dimple on the right one; about estates in the Khersonese, and capital. Selifan even received instructions to collect all the newly purchased serfs, in order that a roll of them might be called. He listened for a long time in silence, and then he left the room, remarking to Petrushka, "Go and undress the master!"

Petrushka set about removing his master's boots, and almost dragged him on to the floor with them. But at last the boots were removed, the master properly undressed, and after tossing about for a while on the bed, which creaked unmercifully, he fell asleep, fully convinced that he was a landowner in the Khersonese. But in the meanwhile Petrushka had carried his trousers and his cranberry-coloured coat into the corridor, and, hanging them up, he began to beat and brush them so that the dust flew all over the place. As he was preparing to take them down again he glanced outside and perceived Selifan just coming from the stable. Their glances met, and they understood each other by instinct: the master had fallen asleep, so that they could take a little run on their own account. Carrying the coat and trousers into the room, Petrushka immediately went downstairs; and they both set off without uttering a single word to each other as to the object of their expedition, but chatting on the way of a totally different subject. Their walk was not a long one, however; they only went just across the street to a building which stood opposite the inn. Here they entered a cellar-like room, where people of all sorts were seated at wooden tables—men with shaven and unshaven chins; men in sheepskin coats, and men in nothing but shirts; with one fellow who wore a frieze cloak.

What Selifan and Petrushka did there, God only knows; but they came out an hour later, arm-in-arm, in utter silence, showing each other great attention, and mutually preventing each other from falling. Hand in hand, and without ever releasing their hold on each other, they fumbled about on the staircase for a quarter of an hour, then mounted, and reached their master's rooms. Petrushka halted for a moment before his lowly bed, meditating how he could lie down upon it in the most genteel manner, and then he stretched himself directly across it, so that his feet rested on the floor. Selifan lay down on the same bed, placing his head on Petrushka's stomach, forgetting that he ought not to have slept there at all, but in the servants' quarters, or in the stable near the horses. Both fell asleep at the same instant, raising a snore of incredible loudness, to which their master replied from the other room with a thin, nasal whistle. Soon after this all sank into silence, and the inn was wrapt in impenetrable slumber. In one small window alone was there still a light visible; it was the window of a room occupied by some cornet or other, who had come from Ryazan, and who was evidently very fond of boots, for since his arrival he had already ordered four pairs, and was now trying on a fifth one. Several times he approached his bed with the intention of throwing them off and lying down, but he could by no means bring himself to do so. The boots were really very well made; and for a long time he still kept lifting up his feet and gazing with admiration at the high and wonderfully formed heels.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE GOVERNOR'S BALL

TCHITCHIKOFF'S purchases became the subject of conversation throughout the town. Discussions went on, and opinions were expressed as to whether the purchase of serfs for colonisation was profitable. In the course of the debate many people showed themselves to be thoroughly conversant with the subject. "Of course," said some, "it is profitable. There is no question as to that; the soil in the southern provinces is very fine and fertile; but what will Tchitchikoff do with his serfs if he has no water? For there certainly are no rivers thereabouts."

"The lack of water would be nothing, nothing at all, Stepan Dimitrievitch," replied another wiseacre; "but this colonisation of serfs is a hopeless matter. It is a well-known fact that on new land, where the work is confined to agriculture—where there is nothing, neither izbá nor manor-house—the moujik will run away, as sure as twice two make four, and will, indeed, take himself off in such a manner that you will never discover the slightest trace of him."

"No, Alexei Ivanovitch; excuse me, excuse me: I do not agree with you at all when you say that Tchitchikoff's moujiks will run away. A Russian man is capable of anything, and can adapt himself to all climates. Send him to Kamchatka if you like, only give him some warm gloves, and, axe in hand, he will set to work and build himself a new izbá."

"But, Ivan Grigorievitch, you have lost sight of one very important fact: you have not yet inquired what sort of moujiks Tchitchikoff has bought? You have forgotten that a landowner does not part with good serfs. I am ready to forfeit my head if Tchitchikoff's serfs are not thieves, drunkards to the last degree, and of idle and dissolute behaviour."

"Yes, yes, I agree to that; that is true: nobody sells good moujiks, and Tchitchikoff's men are drunkards; but you must take into consideration that there is a moral here—that a moral point is involved: they are worthless now, but, when settled on new land, they may all at once turn into good subjects. There have been plenty of examples of that sort, not only in the world itself, but also in history."

"Never, never!" said the director of the imperial factories;

"and believe me, it never can be: for Tchitchikoff's serfs will now have two powerful enemies. The first enemy will be their proximity to the Little Russian provinces, where the sale of wine is freely allowed. I assure you, that in two weeks' time they will have drunk themselves to death. The other enemy will be the habit of a vagabond life, which they must infallibly acquire during the process of removal. It will be necessary for Tchitchikoff to keep them constantly before his eyes, and to govern them with all due strictness; punish them for each shortcoming, and not depute this to any other person, but slap their faces and whip them himself, whenever it is required."

"Why must Tchitchikoff administer castigation in person? He might find an overseer."

"Yes, find an overseer who can! Overseers are all rascals!"

"Rascals, because the master does not occupy himself with his affairs."

"That is true," broke in several. "An owner ought to know something, at least, about the management of his estate, and be able to discriminate between people: then he would always have a good steward."

But the director of the imperial factories declared that a good steward was not to be found for less than five thousand roubles. And then the president of the court said that one might be had for three thousand. But the director retorted, "Where will you find him? In your own nose?" Whereupon the president said, "No, not in my nose, but in this very district—namely, Piotr Piotrovitch Samoiloff: that's the overseer whom Tchitchikoff needs for his moujiks."

Many of the townspeople entered heartily into Tchitchikoff's position, and the difficulties of removing so large a number of serfs greatly alarmed them; they even began to feel much afraid that a revolt should break out among such uneasy subjects as Tchitchikoff's serfs. Thereupon the chief of police remarked that there was no mutiny to be apprehended; that the captain-ispravnik existed for the purpose of preventing any rising; that, if the captain-ispravnik could not go himself, he need only send his cap, and that this cap alone would drive the serfs to the very locality fixed upon for colonisation. Many staked their estates that this would exterminate the spirit of rebellion in Tchitchikoff's unruly peasants. Opinions varied greatly: some there were who pronounced in favour of military sternness and severity, even if it were a little excessive; others counselled mildness. The chief of police remarked that a sacred responsibility now rested on Tchitchikoff; that the latter might become, in a certain sense, a father to his serfs, as he expressed it; he might even lead them to a beneficent state of culture, and in this connection he spoke in laudatory terms of the Lancastrian method of mutual instruction.

In this manner did the townspeople discuss and talk the matter over, and many, moved by sympathy, even communicated their

advice to Tchitchikoff, and actually went so far as to offer a convoy for the safe transport of the peasants. Tchitchikoff thanked them for their advice, saying that he would not fail to adopt it in case of need, but he declined the escort in a decided manner, saying that it was not in the least necessary; that the serfs whom he had purchased were of an exceedingly peaceable disposition; that they were themselves very well disposed towards the idea of removal, and that no revolt could possibly arise among them under any circumstances whatever. All these discussions and expressions of opinion produced, however, the very happiest results that Tchitchikoff could possibly desire. They gave rise, in fact, to reports that he was neither more nor less than a great millionaire. The inhabitants of the town had already fallen heartily in love with Tchitchikoff, even without this, as we have seen in the first chapter; but now, after all these rumours, they became still more deeply attached to him. Moreover, they were good-natured people, if the truth must be told, and lived together in harmony, treating each other in a friendly fashion with kind-hearted simplicity and gentleness. They were also much given to hospitality, and the man who had tasted their bread and salt, or who had sat out an evening at whist with them, became, in a certain way, their relative; and this was especially the case with Tchitchikoff, with his engaging manners and qualities, for he was really possessed of the great power of pleasing. They took such a fancy to him that he actually could not devise a means of tearing himself from the city; all that he heard was, "Come, one little week; live with us just one little week longer, Pavel Ivanovitch!" In a word, he was petted to death, as the expression runs.

And yet more worthy of note (indeed, a complete subject of surprise) was the impression which Tchitchikoff produced on the ladies. Previously they had had very little to say about him, although they had done him full justice, so far as his agreeable manners in society were concerned; however, from the instant when reports as to his being a millionaire became current, they discovered other qualities in him. The ladies were not in the least interested parties, however: the word "millionaire" was to blame for it all. Not the millionaire himself, but simply the word; for there is something about the very sound of this word, more than about any money-bag, which produces an effect equally on rascally people, on people who are neither one thing nor the other, and upon good people—in short, it takes effect upon everybody. The millionaire has this advantage—that he can see baseness—pure, utterly disinterested baseness—founded upon no calculations whatever. Many know very well that they will receive nothing from him, and that they have no right to receive anything; but they will infallibly anticipate his desires, laugh, pull off their hats, and force an invitation for themselves to the dinner where they know that the millionaire

is asked. It is impossible to assert that this tender leaning towards baseness was experienced by the ladies: still, there were many drawing-rooms where they began to say that, of course, Tchitchikoff was not such a very handsome man, but that he possessed the exact amount of good looks which are requisite in a man; that if he had been a little thicker or fatter, it would have been unbecoming. In this connection something was said about a thin man which was of a rather offensive character—that he was in the nature of a toothpick, and indeed not a man at all. Additions of various sorts were made to the attire of the ladies. There was a throng and almost a crush in the bazaar; and a procession was even formed, to such a degree had equipages flocked there. The merchants were amazed to find that some pieces of goods which they had brought from the yearly fair, and which they had not been able to get rid of on account of their rather high price, had now come into fashion all at once, and that customers fairly tore them from each other's hands. One dame was observed during mass to have such a train to her dress, that it monopolised half the church, so that the chief of police of the district, who chanced to be present, gave orders that the common people were to move farther off—that is to say, nearer to the vestibule—in order that her excellency's robes might not be damaged.

Even Tchitchikoff himself could not but observe this unusual attention to some extent. Once, on returning home, he found a letter on his table. Whence it had come, and who had brought it, it was impossible to discover. The inn servant simply declared that it had been brought there, and that he had been told not to mention by whom. This letter began in very decided terms, as follows: "Yes, I must write to you!" Then something was said about the existence of a secret sympathy between souls. This truth was enforced by some points of exclamation which took up nearly half a line. Then followed some remarks which were so very striking, that we consider it indispensable to quote them: "What is our life? A vale in which sorrows have taken up their abode." "What is the world? A throng of people without feeling." The writer then informed him that she was bedewing with her tears some lines traced by her tender mother, who had been dead for twenty-five years. Next she invited Tchitchikoff to go with her to the wilderness; to abandon for ever the city, where people could not benefit by the air in their stifling quarters. The end of the letter expressed absolute despair, and it concluded with these words:—

"Two turtle-doves will show thee
My ashes cold and dried;
With yearning coos will tell thee,
That 'twas, alas! in tears I died."

The last line would not scan, but that mattered nothing: the letter was composed in the taste of the period. There was no

signature: neither was there name or surname, nor even the month or date. The writer merely added in the postscript that Tchitchikoff's own heart must divine who had penned it, and that the original would be present at the governor's ball, which was to take place on the morrow.

This interested him greatly. There was something so attractive about this Anonyma, something which appealed so strongly to his curiosity, that he read her epistle for a second, and even for a third time, and finally said, "Well, I am curious to know who wrote such a thing!" In a word, the matter had evidently become serious: he pondered and thought it over for more than an hour; at last, flinging open his arms, and dropping his head, he said, "That letter is very, very fancifully written!" Then, of course, the letter was folded up, and laid away in his dressing-case, in company with some theatre-bills and a wedding invitation, which he had preserved for seven years in the same position and the same place. A little later, indeed, an invitation to a ball at the governor's was brought to him—a matter of very common occurrence in provincial towns. Wherever there is a governor, balls are given; otherwise the proper allegiance and respect of the nobility could not be maintained.

Our hero's appearance at the ball produced a remarkable effect. Every one who was present turned to greet him—one with his hand full of cards; another at the most interesting point in a conversation, just as he was saying, "But the lower district judge replied to that"—But whatever the district judge did reply, it was flung on one side, and the speaker hastened forward with a welcome for our hero: "Pavel Ivanovitch! Ah, my Heavens! Dear Pavel Ivanovitch! Most respected Pavel Ivanovitch! My soul, Pavel Ivanovitch! Here you are, Pavel Ivanovitch! Here he is, our Pavel Ivanovitch! Permit me to press your hand, Pavel Ivanovitch! Give him here: I will kiss him as fervently as possible, my precious Pavel Ivanovitch!" Tchitchikoff found himself in the embrace of several persons at once. He had not succeeded in wholly freeing himself from the embrace of the president of the court, when he found himself in that of the chief of police; then the chief of police handed him over to the inspector of the medical institution; the inspector of the medical institution to the brandy farmer; the brandy farmer to the architect. The governor, who was at that moment standing beside a lady, and holding in one hand a bonbon motto and a Bolognese spaniel, flung both motto and spaniel on the floor as soon as he caught sight of him, whereupon the dog set up a howl. In a word, our hero shed abroad great joy and mirth. Upon every countenance there beamed either satisfaction or at least the reflection of the universal satisfaction. Thus it is with the faces of officials during their superior's visits of inspection, after their first fear has passed off, when they perceive that the state of things satisfies him, and

when he has at last been graciously pleased to jest; that is, to say a few words with an amiable smirk. The officials who find themselves close to him laugh in double measure at this; even those who have but barely heard the words which he has uttered, laugh; and, last of all, a man who stands afar off, near the door, at the very entrance, perhaps—some police-officer, who has never laughed all his life since his birth, and who, hitherto, has only shown his fist to the people—even he, by the irresistible law of reflection exhibits some sort of a smile, although this smile may resemble the expression on the face of a man who is on the point of sneezing after a pinch of strong snuff.

Our hero replied to each and all, and was conscious of his unusual skill: he bowed to right and to left, somewhat on one side, according to his custom, but with perfect ease, so that he enchanted everyone. The ladies immediately surrounded him in a glittering garland, and brought with them a perfect cloud of every sort of perfume: one breathed forth roses, another smelt of spring and violets, a third was thoroughly permeated with mignonette. Tchitchikoff simply raised his nose in the air, and sniffed. There was a great variety of taste exhibited in the ladies' costumes: their muslins and satins were of such pale, fashionable colours, that it is impossible to put names to them; bands of ribbon, and bouquets of flowers, fluttered here and there on the dresses, in the most picturesque disorder, although many a very orderly head had laboured over this disorder; the airy head-dresses only clung on by one ear, so to speak, and seemed to say, "Ei, I shall fly away! 'tis a pity that I cannot bear my beauty away with me!" The ladies' bodices, moreover, fitted them tightly, and presented the most vigorous and pleasing forms to the eye.

It is necessary to state, that all the ladies of N—— were rather plump; but they laced themselves so artfully, and had such agreeable ways, that their rotundity was not noticed at all. Everything about their appearance had been the subject of great thought, attention, and care: their necks and shoulders were uncovered just as much as was necessary, and not a bit more; each one exhibited her possessions up to that point where, according to her own convictions, she felt persuaded that they were fitted to enslave the men: all the rest was concealed with remarkable taste; either some adornment of ribbon, and lighter than the little puffs which are called "kisses," encircled the neck in an ethereal way, or else little vandyked layers of thin cambric, known under the name of "modesties," emerged from the dress behind the shoulders. These "modesties" covered certain things both behind and before which were not calculated to make a man feel unhappy, while, at the same time, they made him suspect the existence of the destroying objects. Long gloves were drawn up almost to the sleeves, but deliberately left bare the attractive portions of the arms above the elbows, many of

which were of an enviable plumpness: in some cases the kid gloves had burst, while being encouraged to ascend higher. In short, it seemed as though on all of them was written, "This is not the provinces; this is the capital; this is Paris itself!" Only here and there did some head-dress, hitherto unseen upon earth, thrust itself forward, or even some feather, possibly a peacock's, arranged quite in opposition to the fashion, and in accordance with individual taste. But this is not to be avoided; such is the nature of a provincial town; it will infallibly break out in some spot or other.

However, as Tchitchikoff stood before the ladies he wondered, "But which one of them is the writer of that letter?" And then he thrust his nose forward to look more attentively; directly before it there was an array of elbows, trimmings, sleeves, ends of ribbons, perfumed tuckers and gowns. The gallopade was being danced at a furious rate: the wife of the postmaster, the captain-ispravnik, a lady with a blue feather, a lady with a white feather, the Georgian Prince Tchipkhaikhilidzeff, an official from Petersburg, an official from Moscow, a Frenchman—Coucou—Perkhunovsky, Berebendovsky, they all had risen and joined in.

Tchitchikoff soon became utterly bewildered in his efforts to decide which of the ladies was the writer of the letter. On endeavouring to fix a penetrating glance on the women, he became aware, that, on their part, something was being expressed which sent both hope and sweet pain deep down into the heart of a poor mortal, so that he said at last, "No, it is utterly impossible to guess." This did not, however, in any way diminish the cheerful frame of mind in which he found himself. He exchanged a few agreeable words with the ladies, in an easy and skilful manner; approached one and another with a tripping, mincing gait, as is generally done by little old dandies on their high heels, which are called "mice's horses," as they trip briskly among the ladies. After tripping to right and left with skilful turns, he gave a scrape of the foot in the shape of a short tail, or a comma. The ladies were greatly pleased, and not only discovered in him a large number of amiable and agreeable qualities, but began to perceive a noble expression on his countenance—something martial and warlike—which, as it is well known, is extremely pleasing to women. They even began to quarrel a little over him. On perceiving that he tarried near the door, some of them made haste to occupy seats as close to the door as possible; and when one of them succeeded in effecting this before the others, there all but ensued an exceedingly unpleasant scene; and many who would have liked to do the same thing themselves, found such boldness extremely shocking.

Tchitchikoff was so occupied by his conversation with the ladies, or, rather, the ladies so occupied and surrounded him with their conversation, indulging in a vast number of the best-planned and refined allegories, which all were bound to guess,

and which made the perspiration start out upon his brow, that he forgot to comply with the requirements of politeness, and address his hostess first of all. He only recalled it when he heard the voice of the governor's wife, who had been standing before him for some moments already. This lady said to him, in a rather flattering and roguish voice, with an amiable shake of the head, "Ah, Pavel Ivanovitch, so you are here!"

It is impossible to reproduce the next words of the governor's wife with accuracy, but something amiable was said by her in the spirit in which the ladies and cavaliers express themselves in the novels of our society writers—those gentlemen who are so fond of describing drawing-rooms, and who plume themselves on their knowledge of the highest "tone"—something in the strain of, "Have the others taken such possession of your heart that there is no longer any room in it, not even the smallest corner, for those whom you have so pitilessly forgotten?" Our hero instantly turned to the governor's wife, and was on the point of making her a reply which would probably have proved in no wise inferior to those which are perpetrated in fashionable novels by the Zvonskys, Linskys, Lidins, Gremins, and all the other clever military men, when, chancing to raise his eyes unexpectedly, he suddenly paused, as though benumbed.

The governor's wife was not standing alone before him: she held by the hand a young girl of sixteen—a fresh blonde, with delicate and well-formed features: a little pointed chin, a bewitchingly rounded, oval face, such as an artist would have chosen as a model for the Madonna, and such as is rarely encountered in Russia, where everything is fond of appearing in broad forms—mountains and forests and steppes, and faces and lips and feet—the very little blonde whom he had met on the highway as he was leaving Nozdreff's, when, through the stupidity of their coachmen, or of their horses, their equipages had come so strangely into collision, so entangling the harness that uncle Mityai and uncle Minyai had had to straighten matters. Tchitchikoff now became so confused that he could not utter a single suitable word; indeed he muttered—the deuce knows what, but something which neither a Gremin, nor a Zvonsky, nor a Lidin would have said.

"You do not know my daughter yet," said the governor's wife; "she is a school-girl, and has only just returned home."

But our hero replied that he had already had the unexpected pleasure of making her acquaintance. Then he tried to add something more, but failed. The governor's wife said two or three words, and then went off with her daughter to the other end of the apartment to her other guests: while Tchitchikoff continued to stand motionless in the same place, like a man who has gone cheerfully out into the street in order to take a walk, with eyes disposed to look at everything, and who has suddenly stopped stockstill, as though he had forgotten something. More

stupid than that man no one can possibly be. In an instant his agreeable expression has vanished from his face: he strives to recollect what it is that he has forgotten. Is it his handkerchief? No, his handkerchief is in his pocket. Is it his money? But no, his money is also in his pocket. He seems to have everything about him; and yet some unknown spirit whispers to him, in his ear, that he has forgotten something. And so he gazes abstractedly and gloomily at the moving throng before him—at the flying equipages; at the caps and guns of a passing regiment; at a sign-board; and withal he sees nothing distinctly. Thus also did Tchitchikoff become a stranger to all that was going on around him. At this same moment, a multitude of hints and questions, all full of refinement and amiability, were being addressed to him by the perfumed mouths of the ladies: "Is it permitted to us poor dwellers on the earth to be so bold as to ask you what you are thinking about?" "Where lie those blissful regions in which your thoughts are hovering?" "May we know the name of her who has plunged you into this sweet valley of meditation?"

However, our hero replied carelessly, their agreeable phrases being as much wasted as though they had been cast into the water. He was even so impolite that he speedily deserted them, and went away to another part of the room, being desirous of seeing where the governor's wife had gone with her daughter. But the ladies, it appeared, were not willing to release him so quickly. Each one of them inwardly resolved to employ all those feminine weapons which are so dangerous to our hearts, and to set all their best devices in motion. Each of them took an inward vow that she would be as fascinating as possible in the dance, and show off her best points in all their brilliancy. The postmaster's wife, as she waltzed, drooped her head on one side in a very languishing way, as though she really were listening to something supernatural. One extremely charming woman, who had not come with any intention of dancing—being precluded, as she herself expressed it, by a little incommodity in the shape of a small corn on her right foot, in consequence of which she had even been forced to don soft shoes—could not resist, however, but took a few turns in her cloth foot-gear, simply to prevent the postmaster's wife from getting too many conceited ideas into her head.

However all this by no means produced upon Tchitchikoff the effect which the women had relied upon. He did not even glance at the circle thus formed; but, rising incessantly on tiptoe, he gazed over their heads, in endeavour to see where the fascinating blonde had gone. He also bent down, and stared between their backs and shoulders; and at length he caught sight of his charmer, sitting beside her mother, over whom something in the nature of an Oriental turban with a feather was waving very grandly. Then it seemed as though our hero

wanted to take his beauty by storm. Either the spring weather was taking effect upon him, or someone pushed him from behind; at all events, he made his way forward with great decision, and paying no heed to anyone. The farmer of the brandy revenues received such a thrust from him that he tottered, and barely held his own on one foot; indeed, had it not been for this, he would most assuredly have knocked down a whole row of people. The postmaster also stepped back, and stared at our friend in amazement, mingled with delicate irony; but Tchitchikoff never glanced at him: he only saw the little blonde, pulling on a long glove, in the distance, and doubtless burning with a wish to launch her flight over the waxed floor. Four couples had already begun the mazurka in one corner: their heels tapped the floor; and a staff-captain was toiling with mind and body, with arms and legs, executing such steps as no one else ever executed, even in a dream. Tchitchikoff slipped past the mazurka, almost on the dancers' very heels, and made straight for the spot where sat the governor's wife and her daughter. Still he finally approached them very timidly, and became confused, exhibiting a certain awkwardness in all his movements.

It is impossible to say with certainty whether the sentiment of love had been awakened in our hero: it is even a matter of doubt whether gentlemen of that description—that is to say, gentlemen who are neither fat nor thin—are capable of loving. Nevertheless, there was something strange about this—something which he could not very well explain to himself: it seemed to him, as he afterwards confessed to himself, that the whole ball, with all its chatter and noise, had, for several minutes, retreated far into the distance; the fiddles and horns had sounded from somewhere beyond the mountains; and all was covered with a misty veil, like a carelessly painted field in a picture; and from out of this misty and negligently sketched background there stood out, clear and well defined, the delicate features of the charming blonde: her little oval face; her slender, very slender form—such as girls retain for the first few months after they are released from school; her white and almost plain gown, which clothed her slight, shapely young limbs so lightly and gracefully, defining them in pure outlines. She seemed to him like some admirable toy cleverly turned from ivory; she alone stood out white, transparent, and bright from amid the troublous opaque throng.

Evidently, this is the way things go on in the world; evidently, even Tchitchikoffs are converted into poets for a few minutes in the course of their lives. Perhaps, though, the word *poet* is too strong. At all events, he felt himself like something in the nature of a young man—almost a hussar. Perceiving an empty chair beside the young beauty, he desired to take possession of it. The conversation did not make much progress at first, but afterwards it went very well; and he even began to produce

an effect. In fact, the little blonde actually began to yawn while our hero was telling his tales. He did not notice it in the least, however; but he related a number of agreeable things, which he had already told on similar occasions, in various places.

All the ladies were now thoroughly displeased with Tchitchikoff's behaviour. One of them walked past him, expressly for the purpose of letting him see how she felt, and even brushed the little blonde, in a very impertinent manner, with the heavy rouleau of her dress, and so arranged the scarf which was fluttering about her shoulders, that the end of it flourished into the girl's face; at the same moment, there proceeded from the mouth of some ladies in the rear a very biting and vicious remark, in company with an odour of violets. But he either did not hear it, or pretended that he did not; and this was not right, for the opinions of ladies should be prized. He repented of this, but later on, and consequently, too late.

Indignation, which was perfectly just in every respect, now took possession of the ladies, and was depicted on their faces. However great may have been Tchitchikoff's weight in society, although he was a millionaire, and nobility was expressed—and even something martial and military—on his countenance, yet there are things which ladies will not forgive any man for, be he who he may; and when that is the case—why, there's the end of him. There are cases when a woman, however weak and insipid her character may be, in comparison with that of a man, suddenly becomes firmer not only than a man, but firmer than anything in the whole world. The scorn expressed, almost unintentionally, by Tchitchikoff, restored among the ladies that spirit of concord which had almost vanished, in consequence of their mutual jealousy. The few dry and commonplace words which they involuntarily uttered contained sharp insinuations. To complete the disaster, one of the young men composed on the spot some of those satirical verses about the dancers, without which, as is well known, hardly any provincial ball passes off. These verses were instantly attributed to Tchitchikoff. The indignation waxed fiercer, and the ladies began to talk about him in the various corners, in the most unpleasant manner; as for the poor school-girl, she was utterly annihilated, and sentence was pronounced upon her at once.

But in the meantime, a surprise of the most disagreeable sort was in preparation for our hero. At the very moment when the pretty blonde was yawning, and he was relating to her various incidents which had happened to him at divers times, and even touching lightly on the Greek philosopher Diogenes, Nozdreff made his appearance from the last room in the suite. He was in a joyous, merry mood, and came arm in arm with the procurator, whom he had probably been dragging about for some time already; for the poor procurator was bending his heavy brows in every direction, as though endeavouring to devise

some means of ridding himself of this friendly promenade. In fact, it was intolerable. Nozdreff had sipped courage with two cups of tea, with rum, of course, and had been lying unmercifully. On catching sight of him at a distance, Tchitchikoff even made up his mind to a sacrifice—that is, to abandon his enviable position, and to effect as speedy a retreat as possible: for this encounter boded no good to him. But as ill-luck would have it, the governor came up at that moment, expressed extraordinary delight at having found Pavel Ivanovitch, and detained him, begging him to act as judge in a dispute of his with two ladies on the question, "Whether woman's love were lasting, or not?" However, in the meantime, Nozdreff had caught sight of our hero, and made straight for him.

"Ah, ah! the Khersonese landowner! the Khersonese landowner!" he shouted, marching up, and bursting into a laugh, which made his cheeks, fresh and glowing as a rose in spring, quiver: "How now? have you bought any more dead souls? Surely, you do not know, your excellency," he screamed, turning to the governor: "this man deals in dead souls! By Heavens! Listen, Tchitchikoff: you know that I am speaking out of friendship, for you and I are friends, and his excellency here also. I would like to hang you, by Heavens, I'd like to hang you!"

Tchitchikoff did not know where he was.

"Will you believe it, your excellency?" went on Nozdreff: "he said to me, 'Sell me your dead souls'; and I fairly burst with laughter! I come here, and I am told that he has purchased three million roubles' worth of serfs for colonisation. Colonisation, indeed! he tried to buy dead souls of me. Listen, Tchitchikoff: you're a fraud, by Heavens, a fraud! Here's his excellency here.—It's true, isn't it, procurator?"

But the procurator, Tchitchikoff, and even the governor himself, were in such confusion, that they found absolutely nothing whatever to say; and in the meantime, Nozdreff, paying not the least heed to them, continued his half-drunken speech: "Wait, my good fellow, you, you—I shall not leave you until I find out why you were buying dead souls. Listen, Tchitchikoff, you really ought to be ashamed of yourself! You know yourself that you have no better friend than I. And here's his excellency. It's true, isn't it, procurator? You cannot conceive, your excellency, how we are bound up in each other; that is, it is simply as though you were to say, here—I stand here, and you ask, 'Nozdreff, tell me on your conscience, which is dearer to you, your own father, or Tchitchikoff?' Well, I should answer, 'Tchitchikoff, by Heavens!' Permit me, my soul, I will give you one kiss.—Pardon me, your excellency; but I must kiss him.—Yes, Tchitchikoff; now don't resist; allow me to imprint just one little kiss upon thy snow-white cheek!"

Nozdreff was so vigorously repulsed, however, as he attempted to bestow his kiss, that he came near flying full-length on the

floor. Everyone had retreated from him, and listened no more. But his remarks about dead souls had been uttered at the top of his voice, and had been accompanied by such boisterous laughter, that they had attracted the attention, even of those who were in the most remote corners of the room. This news seemed so terrible, that all paused with a sort of wooden, stupidly interrogative expression on their faces. Tchitchikoff observed that several of the ladies winked at each other, with a malicious, biting smile; and there was an equivocal expression on some of their faces which still further increased his confusion.

That Nozdreff was a notorious liar was known to all; and the most utter nonsense from him would not have been the slightest novelty: but mortal man—truly, it is hard to understand how a mortal is constructed: no matter what a saying may be, so long as it is a novelty, he instantly communicates it to another mortal, if only for the sake of saying, "Just see what lies are disseminated!" and the other mortal inclines his ear with pleasure, although he himself afterwards says, "Why, that is a stupid lie, which is not worth noticing!" and then he instantly sets out to seek a third mortal, tells him all about it, and then they both exclaim, with noble indignation, "What a stupid lie!" And all this will infallibly go the rounds of the whole town; and all the mortals therein, no matter what their number may be, will inevitably talk their fill, and then confess that it deserves no attention and is not worth talking about.

This apparently trivial incident visibly disturbed our hero. No matter how stupid a fool's words may be, they are often sufficient to perturb a sensible man. Tchitchikoff began to feel awkward and out of place; it was exactly as though a beautifully cleaned boot had been suddenly plunged into a muddy, evil-smelling puddle; in short, it was unpleasant, very unpleasant indeed. He tried not to think of it; he endeavoured to divert his thoughts, to enjoy himself: he sat down to the whist-table, but everything went crooked. Twice he made a mistake in the suit, and, forgetting that one does not deal to one's self third, he gave a flourish with his hands, and proceeded. The president of the court could not in the least comprehend how it was that Pavel Ivanovitch, who knew how to play so well, and, one might even say, delicately, could make such mistakes, and had even sacrificed his king of spades, upon which, to use his own expression, he, the president, had relied as upon a stone wall. Finally, the postmaster and the president, and even the chief of police, as was proper, began to jest over our hero, to say that he was in love, that "We know all about it: Pavel Ivanovitch's heart is bad, and we know by whom it has been wounded." However, all this did not console him in the least, try as he would to laugh and to jest in return. He was not even in a state to unbend at supper, although the company at table was very agreeable, and Nozdreff had been led away long before: for even

the ladies had at length perceived that his conduct had been quite too scandalous. In the middle of the cotillion, he had seated himself on the floor, and began to catch at the skirts of the feminine dancers, which, to use the ladies' expression, was unlike anything else that had ever been heard of.

The supper was very gay: but Tchitchikoff did not even await the end of it; he went home much earlier than it was his custom to go. There, in his little chamber, which is so familiar to the reader, with some drawers half blocking up the door, and some beetles peeping out of the corners now and then, his thoughts and spirits became as uncomfortable as the uncomfortable arm-chair in which he sat. There was a troubled, disagreeable sensation at his heart: a sort of heavy void. "May the deuce take all those who originated balls!" he said angrily. "Now, what the Fiend is there to make merry about? There are bad crops and high prices all over the government, and yet they must needs have a ball. Eh, a pretty affair, truly!"

While our friend was sitting in his uncomfortable arm-chair busied with his thoughts, the tallow candle burned on before him, its light long since obscured by its long black wick and threatening to go out every instant; while through the window, the dull, dark night peeped in at him on the point of turning blue with the approaching dawn; for the cocks already crowed afar. At this very hour, too, in another quarter of the town, an incident was taking place which was destined to increase the unpleasantness of our hero's position.

Along the distant streets and alleys there rattled a very singular equipage, which aroused doubt within one's mind as to its proper nomenclature. It did not resemble a tarantas, nor a calash, nor a britchka: it was more like a swollen, fat-cheeked watermelon set upon wheels. The sides of the watermelon—that is to say, the doors, which bore traces of yellow paint—closed very badly, on account of the dilapidated condition of the handles and locks; so they were secured with strings. The watermelon was filled with chintz pillows, sacks of grain, *kalatchi*,* *kokurki*, *skorodumki*, and cracknels of raised dough. A chicken-pie and a pasty filled with pickled cucumbers even peeped out on the top; while the foot-board was occupied by an individual of the lackey species, clad in a short round jacket of variegated home-made stuff, and an unkempt pepper and salt beard, an individual of the sort known by the appellation of *malui*.†

The rattle and squeak of the iron clamps and the rusty screws as the vehicle passed along, awakened a watchman quite at the other end of the town, and this fellow, raising his halberd, shouted at the top of his voice through his sleep, "Who goes there?" but perceiving at last that no one was going past him, and that

* Meat patties.

† "Boy," in the sense of servant, regardless of age, just as a negro was formerly called a "boy" in the South of the United States.

there was only a rattling in the distance, he shook himself by his collar, made of some sort of wild beast's skin, and, stepping up to his lantern, he chastised it thoroughly. Then, quitting his halberd once more, he went to sleep again, according to the laws of his order of chivalry. Meanwhile the horses of the watermelon coach had fallen down more than once, for they were not shod; and, besides it was evident that the ancient pavement of the town was not familiar to them. The *koluimaga*,* after making several turns from street to street, finally drove into an obscure lane leading past the little parish church of St. Nikolai, and halted before the gate of the protopope's house. From the vehicle then descended a maidservant wearing a kerchief and a *tyelogryeka*.† She knocked at the gate with both fists as vigorously as though she had been a man. Then the dogs began to bark; and finally the gates, opening, ingulfed, although with great difficulty, this clumsy travelling conveyance.

The equipage entered a small courtyard, which was full of wood, chicken-coops, and cages; from the equipage then emerged a lady, who was none other than our friend the widow of the collegiate secretary Korobotchok. Shortly after our hero's departure, she had become so uneasy with regard to any possible trickery on his part, that, after losing her sleep for three nights in succession, she had made up her mind to go to town herself, and this despite the fact that her horses were not shod. She meant to find out definitely what dead souls were good for, and whether she had not committed a blunder, which God forbid, in selling them, perchance, too cheaply. The eventual result of her arrival in town will be learnt by the reader from a conversation which took place soon afterwards between two ladies. We will give this conversation in the next chapter.

* An ugly, heavy, old-fashioned coach. † A short, warm jacket.

CHAPTER NINE

THE EMOTIONS OF A SMALL TOWN

In the morning, even at an earlier hour than was suitable for visits, a lady in an elegant plaid cloak emerged from the door of an orange-coloured wooden mansion with blue columns, accompanied by a lackey in a coat with numerous capes, and a gold band on his glossy round hat.

The lady, with remarkable haste, entered a calash which stood at the entrance. The lackey immediately slammed the door after her, put up the steps, and seizing the strap behind, called out to the coachman, "Drive on!" The lady had just learned some news, and she felt an unconquerable desire to impart it to her friends. She looked out of the window every instant, and saw, to her indescribable vexation, that she was still only half way to her destination. Every house seemed longer to her than usual: the white stone hospital, with it narrow windows, dragged out to an interminable length, so that at last she could not restrain her impatience, but said, "There's no end to that cursed building!" Twice did the coachman receive the order, "Faster, faster, Andriushka! You drive intolerably slow to-day!" Finally, however, the lady reached her destination. The calash halted before a one-storey wooden house of a dark grey hue, with white bas-reliefs over the windows, a lofty wooden grating before the windows, and a narrow palisade in front, behind which some slender trees gleamed white with the city dust which never left them. In the windows of the house some pots of flowers were to be seen, together with a parrot swinging in a cage, and clinging to his ring with his beak, and there were also two poodles lying asleep in the sunshine. In this house dwelt a feminine friend of the lady who had just driven up. For various reasons we prefer to call this friend by the nickname which was almost universally accorded to her in the town of N——; namely, "The charming lady." She had acquired this cognomen in a legitimate manner; for indeed she spared no pains to make herself extremely agreeable.

Still, amid all her amiability there certainly did peep out some disagreeable traits, and at times her gracious words pricked one most unmercifully. However everything was dispensed with a refined art such as is only met with in provincial towns. Each

of her movements was tasteful; she was very fond of poetry; she even knew how to hold her head in a dreamy way; and everyone agreed that she was really charming in every respect.

But the other lady—that is to say, the visitor—was not so many-sided in character, so we will simply call her "the nice lady." The arrival of this visitor awakened the poodles, who were slumbering in the sun—shaggy Adèle and the thin-legged male puppy, Potpourri. Both carried their curled tails into the ante-room, where the visitor had freed herself of her cloak, and stood in a gown of fashionable pattern and colour. There was a long scarf about her neck, and an odour of jasmine was wafted through the room. No sooner had the charming lady heard of the arrival of her friend, the nice lady, than she ran out into the ante-room. The ladies seized each other by the hand, kissed each other, and screamed as schoolgirls scream when they meet shortly after their release from their studies, and before their mammas have succeeded in explaining to them that the father of one suitor is poorer and of lower rank than the other. The kisses were very loud, so that the poodles began to bark again, for doing which they were switched with a handkerchief. Then both ladies betook themselves to the drawing-room, which was blue, of course, with a divan, an oval table, and even a plush-covered screen; after them ran shaggy Adèle and Potpourri on his slender legs. "Here, here, in this nice little corner!" said the hostess, seating her guest in one corner of the sofa. "That's it, that's it! Now, here's a cushion for you." So saying, she thrust behind the other's back a cushion, which had a knight worked upon it in wool, in the fashion in which such things are always worked on canvas: his nose projected like a staircase, and his lips were square. "How glad I am that you have called," now resumed the charming lady. "I heard someone arrive, and I thought to myself, 'Who can it be so early?' Parasha suggested the wife of the vice-governor; but I said to myself, 'What! has that fool come here to bore us again?' and I was on the point of saying that I was not at home."

The visitor was certainly anxious to communicate her news at once; but an exclamation which the charming lady uttered at that moment gave another turn to the conversation.

"What a gay, pretty chintz!" exclaimed the charming lady, gazing at the gown of the nice lady.

"Yes, it is very gay. But Praskovya Feodorovna thinks that it would be better if the pattern were smaller, and if the dots were blue instead of light brown. I sent some other material to my sister: it's so lovely that it is simply impossible to describe it in words. Just imagine: some little stripes as fine as the human mind can conceive, a blue ground, and across the stripes, all over them in fact, a lot of dots and splashes, dots and splashes, dots and splashes—in short, it is incomparable. I positively declare that there was never anything like it."

"But my dear, that's motley."

"Oh, no! it's not."

"Yes, it's motley."

It must be stated that the charming lady was somewhat of a materialist, inclined to denial and doubt, and that she despised many things in life. However the nice lady again asserted that her material was not in the least degree motley, and exclaimed, "Dear me! you are wearing gimp. Why, gimp is no longer worn."

"What! it is not worn?"

"No: scallops are worn instead."

"Scallops—ah, that's not nice at all!"

"Scallops; everything is scallops; a pelerine scalloped at the edges, scalloped sleeves, scalloped epaulets, scallops below, scallops above, scallops, scallops everywhere."

"That's not at all pretty, Sophia Ivanovna, if everything is scalloped."

"Oh dear me, yes; it is incredibly pretty, Anna Grigorievna. But how greatly surprised you will be to learn that bodices have grown still longer, and that the front is cut in a point. The skirts are quite round, like the old-fashioned farthingales; and a little padding is even added behind, in order that one may look a fine woman."

"Well, that is nice, I must confess!" said the charming lady, making a gesture of the head which was full of dignity.

"Exactly: I confess that I like it," replied the nice lady.

"Well, for myself, I shall not follow that fashion, on any account."

"I also think—well really, when you consider what fashion does come to sometimes. I asked my sister for some patterns, just for the fun of the thing. My Melanie has already made herself a dress in the new style."

"So you have some patterns!" exclaimed the charming lady, not without a perceptible movement of anger.

"Certainly: my sister sent them to me."

"Give them to me, my soul, for the sake of all that's holy!"

"Alas! I have already promised them to Prascovya Feodorovna. Perhaps you can have them after her."

"Who will care to wear anything after Prascovya Feodorovna! It's very strange that you should give the preference to strangers over your own friends."

"But she is my aunt."

"God knows what sort of an aunt she is to you—merely on the husband's side. No, Sophia Ivanovna, don't deny it; I won't hear anything more; you evidently meant to inflict this insult on me. It is plain that you wish to break off all acquaintance with me."

Poor Sophia Ivanovna did not know what to do. She felt

that she had placed herself between two vigorous fires. So much for boasting. She was ready to pull out her tongue to punish herself for her stupidity.

"Well, and what about our delightful friend?" asked the charming lady.

"Ah, my Heavens! Where is my poor head? This is too good! Of course you know, Anna Grigorievna, why I have come to see you this morning?" Here the visitor's breathing became oppressed; and her companion retorted: "Praise and laud him as you like, but I say frankly, and I will say it to his face, that he is a worthless man—worthless, worthless, worthless!"

"But only listen while I disclose to you."

"Rumours have been in circulation that he is handsome; but he is not handsome at all: and his nose—why, it's a most disagreeable nose."

"Permit me, only permit me to tell you—my dearest Anna Grigorievna, permit me to tell you. This is really a story, a story I have to relate."

"What sort of a story, pray?"

"Ah, Anna Grigorievna, my life! if you could only conceive the situation in which I find myself. Just imagine: this morning the protopopess—the wife of Father Kirill—comes to me, and what do you think? What sort of a fellow do you suppose our meek friend, our stranger, is, hey?"

"What! Has he been paying court to the protopopess?"

"Ah, Anna Grigorievna, if he only had been paying court to her, that would be nothing! but listen to what the protopope's wife told me. She says that Mrs. Korobotchka, the landowner, has come to her house, dreadfully frightened and as pale as death, and has told her—what has she not told her! Only listen! it's a perfect romance: all of a sudden, in the dead of the night, when everybody was fast asleep in the house, there came a knock at the gate—the most terrible knock that you can imagine; there was a cry of, 'Open, open! if you don't I'll break down your gates!' How does that strike you? What sort of a charmer is he after that?"

"But what is Mrs. Korobotchka like? Is she young and pretty?"

"Not in the least: she is an old woman."

"Ah, delightful! So he is crazy after an old woman? Well, the taste of our ladies seems to be very nice: they have pitched upon a funny person to fall in love with."

"Why, no, Anna Grigorievna, it's not at all as you think. But fancy, he presents himself armed from head to foot, like Rinaldo Rinaldino, and makes this demand: 'Sell me all your souls that have died.' Then Mrs. Korobotchka replies very sensibly, and says, 'I cannot sell them, as they are dead.'—'No,' says he, 'they are not dead. It's my business to know,' says he,

'whether they are dead, or not; and they're not dead, they're not dead!' he shouts, 'they're not dead!' In short, he behaves in a scandalous manner: the whole village runs up, the children cry, everybody shouts, no one can understand. Well, it was simply horrible! horrible! horrible! But you cannot conceive, Anna Grigorievna, how upset I was when I heard all this. 'My dearest lady,' says the protopopess to me, 'look in the glass, and see how pale you are.'—'I don't want to look in the glass,' I said. 'I must go and tell Anna Grigorievna.' I ordered the calash that very instant. Andriushka, the coachman, asked me where I was going; but I could not utter a word, and I only stared in his face like a fool. I suppose he must have thought that I was crazy. Ah, Anna Grigorievna, if you only knew how it troubled me!"

"But this is very strange," said the charming lady; "what can those dead souls mean? I must admit that I understand nothing whatever about it. This is the second time that I have heard something about dead souls; and although my husband says that Nozdreff lies, there is certainly something in it all."

"But, Anna Grigorievna, imagine my position when I heard this. 'And now,' says Mrs. Korobotchka, 'I do not know,' says she, 'what I am to do. He made me sign my name to some counterfeit document, and he flung a fifteen-rouble bank-note at me. I,' she says, 'I am an inexperienced, helpless widow. I know nothing.' Fine doings, indeed! But if you could gain any conception of how completely I was upset!"

"But it can't be any question of dead souls: something else must be concealed behind."

"I agree with you," said the nice lady, somewhat taken with this idea, and conscious of a strong desire to know what could possibly be concealed behind it all. She even slowly said, "And what do you think is concealed in this case? Come, what do you think?"

"But what do you yourself think?"

"What do I think? I confess that I am completely bewildered," replied the nice lady.

"Still, I should like to know your opinion on the subject."

However the nice lady found nothing to say. She was capable of experiencing emotion, but she was not capable of forming an accurate theory; and for that reason she required, more than any other, tender friendly advice.

"Well, listen to what these dead souls are," said the charming lady; and at these words her guest concentrated all her faculties on listening. Her little ears stretched forward of themselves; she partly rose, so that she hardly rested on the sofa; and, although she was rather heavy, she suddenly became thinner, and almost ethereal, like the down which floats in the air.

"The dead souls——" began the charming lady.

"Well, what are they? what are they?" broke in her visitor, in great excitement.

"The dead souls——"

"Ah, speak, for Heaven's sake!"

"Were simple invented as a blind; but this is the real matter—he wants to carry off the governor's daughter."

This conclusion was by no means expected by the visitor, and it was certainly remarkable in every respect. The nice lady, on hearing it, became transfigured on the spot, grew paler, pale as death, and felt actually alarmed.

"O Heavens!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands. "That is something which I should never have suspected!"

"Well, for myself, I guessed what the matter was as soon as you opened your mouth," replied the charming lady.

"But what are we to think of the way young girls are trained at the Institute after this, Anna Grigorievna? There's innocence for you!"

"Innocence indeed! I have heard that she says such things as I should never have the courage to utter."

"Do you know, Anna Grigorievna, it simply breaks one's heart to see to what a pitch immorality has already attained!"

"But all the men are wild about her, though I must confess that, to my mind, there is nothing in her."

"She is intolerably affected."

"Ah, my life, Anna Grigorievna; she is a statue, and there is not a particle of expression in her face."

"Yes, how affected, how affected she is! Heavens, how affected! I do not know who taught her, but never in my life have I seen a woman put on so many airs!"

"She's a perfect statue, my love, and as pallid as death."

"Oh, don't say that, Sophia Ivanovna! She rouges outrageously."

"Why, what are you saying, Anna Grigorievna? She's chalk, chalk, the purest chalk."

"My dear, I sat beside her: the rouge on her cheeks is a finger thick, and falls off in cakes like stucco. Her mother taught her to use it: she was a coquette herself, and the daughter will surpass the mother."

"Well, now, excuse me, but I am ready to sacrifice my children, my husband, my whole fortune, this very instant, if she uses a single drop, or an atom, or even a shadow, of rouge."

"Ah! good heavens, what are you saying, Sophia Ivanovna?" said the charming lady, clasping her hands.

"Why, really, Anna Grigorievna, *you* say such things that I can only stare at you in amazement," said the nice lady, clasping her hands in her turn.

It may seem strange to the reader that these two ladies should be unable to agree as to what they had seen at almost one and the same time. But this kind of thing happens very frequently.

If one lady looks at an object, it turns out perfectly white; but let another lady look at it, and it will appear red—red as a cranberry.

"Now, this will prove to you that she is pale," went on the charming lady: "I remember now that I was sitting beside Maniloff; and I said to him, 'See how pale she is!' Truly, one needs to be as foolish as our gentlemen are to laud her. But that charmer of ours. Ah, how repulsive he seemed to me! You cannot conceive, Anna Grigorievna, to what a degree he seemed repulsive to me!"

"All the same, there were some ladies who were not entirely indifferent to him."

"Do you mean me, Anna Grigorievna? Why, you can never say that, never, never!"

"No, I was not speaking of you: just as though there were no one else but you!"

"Never, never, Anna Grigorievna! Permit me to remark to you, that I know myself very well; but perhaps what you say might be applied to certain ladies who affect to be unapproachable."

"You must excuse me, Sophia Ivanovna, and allow me to inform you that such scandalous statements have never been connected with my name. With some other, possibly, but not with mine; and you must allow me to tell you so."

"Why have you taken offence? There were other women there: there were even some who seated themselves near the door, in order to be nearer to him."

Now, after these words, spoken by the nice lady, a tempest ought inevitably to have followed: but, to the intense amazement of both ladies, they each suddenly calmed down, and nothing whatever came of it. The charming lady recollected that the dress pattern was not yet in her possession, and the nice lady realised that she had not succeeded in learning all the particulars with regard to the discovery made by her friend. Thus peace speedily ensued. Moreover, it cannot be said of either of the ladies that they experienced any real ill-will towards one another. On the whole, there was nothing malicious about their characters: there had merely arisen in the course of conversation a petty desire to prick each other; one simply indulged in some little pointed word aimed at the other, for enjoyment's sake: "That's for you! now take it and digest it." The impulses of the heart differ in the female as well as in the male sex.

"But still I cannot comprehend," now said the nice lady, "how Tchitchikoff, a new-comer, could make up his mind to such an audacious enterprise. It cannot be that he was without confederates."

"And you think that there are none?"

"But who do you suppose would help him?"

"Well, Nozdreff, for instance."

"Do you think Nozdreff would?"

"And why not? It would be just like him. You know that he tried to sell his own father, or rather, to gamble him away at cards."

"Ah, good Heavens! what interesting news you tell me! I should never have imagined that Nozdreff was mixed up in this affair."

"I have always supposed so."

"When one thinks of it, really what strange things do happen in the world! Now, could anyone have imagined, when Tchitchikoff first came to our town, you recollect, that he would create such a strange commotion? Ah, Anna Grigorievna, if you only knew how thoroughly upset I am! If it were not for your good-will and friendship. And here we are, on the brink of destruction. Ah! what is to become of us? My maid Masha saw me as pale as death just now: 'Dearest mistress,' she says to me, 'you are pale as death.'—'Never mind, Masha,' I answered. But, so that's the state of things. So Nozdreff is concerned in it! I am glad to hear that!"

The nice lady was extremely anxious to learn some further particulars with regard to the elopement; that is to say, about the hour at which it was to take place, and so forth. But the charming lady asserted her ignorance in plain terms. She did not know how to lie: to suppose anything is another matter, especially when the supposition is founded on inward conviction. Now, when she felt an inward conviction, she knew how to stand up for herself; and if any learned advocate, renowned for his gift of overcoming other people's opinions, had attempted to wage battle with her, he would have speedily found out what an inward conviction signifies.

It is not at all surprising that the two ladies should at last have firmly convinced themselves of what they had at first taken merely as an assumption. We, the wise men, as we call ourselves, proceed almost in the same fashion; and our learned judgments serve as a proof of the fact. At first the learned man approaches a problem in a remarkably crafty manner; he begins timidly, with the most modest of questions: "Whence comes it? Did not this land receive its name from such and such a place or person?" or, "Does not this document belong to another and a later period?" or, "Is it not necessary to take this people as meaning that other people?" He immediately quotes various ancient authors, and as soon as he sees, or merely thinks he sees, a hint, he sets off at a trot, takes courage, converses with the ancient writers, puts questions to them, and even answers for them himself, wholly forgetting the fact that he began with a timid assumption. It already seems to him that he sees it all, that everything is clear, and his judgment is summed up in the words, "So this is how it was! So that is the nation we are to understand! So that is the point from which the subject must be

considered!" Then comes publication from the pulpit or professor's chair; and the newly discovered truth is despatched on its travels through the world, gathering to itself followers and disciples.

At the very moment when the two ladies had so successfully and cleverly unravelled this whole complicated matter, the procurator, with his ever immovable physiognomy, his thick brows and winking eyes, entered the drawing-room. The ladies vied with each other in communicating all the circumstances to him; they told him about the purchase of the dead souls, of Tchitchikoff's intention to carry off the governor's daughter, and they contrived to thoroughly confuse him; so that, in spite of standing for a long time in one and the same place, winking with his left eye, and slapping his chin with his handkerchief, he could make absolutely nothing of it.

The ladies left him in that condition, and set off, each insher own direction, to stir up the town. This enterprise they succeeded in carrying out in little more than half an hour. The town was decidedly stirred up: everything was in a ferment, and no one could understand anything about the matter. The ladies had managed to cast such a mist before everyone's eyes, that all the people, and the officials in particular, remained for some time completely bewildered, standing stock-still, with protruding eyes, like sheep. The dead souls, the governor's daughter, and Tchitchikoff were merged and mingled in their brains in a wondrously queer fashion. Then, after their first stupefaction, they tried to separate them one from the other. They endeavoured to understand what they had heard, and became enraged on perceiving that the affair would in no wise explain itself. What sort of a parable was this story about dead souls? There was no logic whatever in dead souls;—how could dead souls be purchased? Where could a fool be found to buy them? And with what sort of contraband money would he effect the purchase? And with what object, and to what use could dead souls be applied? And why mix up the governor's daughter in all this matter. Tchitchikoff might want to run off with her, but why should he buy dead souls in order to accomplish this? And if he bought dead souls, then why elope with the governor's daughter? Did he mean to dower her with the dead souls? In short, what nonsense was this story which had been disseminated throughout the town? And what sort of a state of things was it, when, before one could even turn round, scandals were set afloat and travelled throughout the place. If there had only been some sense in them. But no.

However, they had been put in circulation, so, of course, there was some foundation for them. What! foundation for dead souls? No, none at all! It was all stuff and nonsense! Yes, deuce take it, that, that was all. Meanwhile rumour was followed by rumour; and the whole town began talking about

dead souls and the governor's daughter, about Tchitchikoff and dead souls, and about the governor's daughter and Tchitchikoff. The town, which had hitherto seemed to be asleep, was lashed as by a whirlwind. It woke up, too, all the more readily as it was a long time since there had been any news of any description whatever. For the space of three whole months, nothing had arisen, even of the sort which is designated in capital cities as gossip, and which, as is well known, is equivalent, so far as town life is concerned, to a timely supply of edible provisions. Now that these stories anent our hero became current, two opposing parties were instantly formed—the masculine party and the feminine party. The masculine party, which was perfectly ridiculous, directed its attention to the dead souls, while the feminine occupied itself exclusively with the abduction of the governor's daughter. In this party—to the honour of the ladies, it must be remarked—there was incomparably more order and caution. Their vocation was, evidently, to be good and orderly housewives. With them everything speedily assumed a vivid and definite aspect, was clothed in clear and visible form, explained, and sifted: in short, a finished picture was presented. It appeared that Tchitchikoff had been enamoured of the governor's daughter for a long time, and that they had met by moonlight in the garden; that the governor would even have given our friend his daughter, for Tchitchikoff was as rich as a Jew, if it had not been for his wife, whom he had abandoned—though where and how they had learned that Tchitchikoff was married, was more than anyone could say. However, it appeared that his wife, who was suffering from hopeless love, had written the most touching letters to the governor; and that Tchitchikoff, on seeing that the girl's father and mother would not give their consent on any terms, had resolved on abduction. In other houses this was narrated somewhat differently: That Tchitchikoff had no wife at all; but that, like a clever man, acting on a certainty, he had, in order to obtain the daughter's hand, begun matters with the mother; that he had carried on an intrigue with her, and that afterwards he had made his proposal for the daughter's hand, whereupon the mother, becoming alarmed lest a crime against religion should be committed, and feeling the gnawings of conscience within her soul, had flatly refused; so that was why Tchitchikoff had decided upon an elopement.

To all this, many explanations and corrections were added, in proportion as the rumours at length penetrated to the most remote parts of the town. In Russia, the lower classes are very fond of discussing the scandals which take place in the highest society; so people began to talk this over in miserable little cabins, where no one knew Tchitchikoff, nor had even set eyes upon him; and fresh additions, and very extensive explanations, were made. The subject grew more and more absorbing, and assumed a more definite form each day; finally,

it was brought to the ears of the governor's wife herself, in all its perfection.

This lady, as the mother of a family, and the first lady in the town, felt thoroughly insulted by such stories, and flew into a rage, which was in every respect justifiable. The poor little blonde had to undergo the most unpleasant *tête-à-tête* that ever it fell to the lot of a sixteen-year-old maiden to endure. Whole floods of questions, cross-questions, declarations, threats, reproaches, exhortations ensued, so that the girl burst into tears and sobbed, and could not understand a single word. Meanwhile the house porter received strict orders not to admit Tchitchikoff at any time, or under any circumstances.

Having accomplished their business so far as the governor's wife was concerned, the ladies made an attack on the masculine party, endeavouring to bring the latter over to their side, and asserting that the dead souls were all a fabrication, and only made use of in order to avert all suspicion, so that the abduction might the more successfully be carried out. Many of the men were actually converted, and went over to the women's side, despite the fact that they were vigorously upbraided by their companions, who heaped upon them the opprobrious names of "women" and "petticoats," which terms, as is well known, are extremely insulting to the male sex.

But arm themselves and resist as they would, there was no such order in the masculine party as there was in the feminine one. Everything with the males was, after a fashion, rude, unpolished, unfitting, awkward, inharmonious, ugly: there was a confusion in their heads, a turmoil, a lack of clearness, a slovenliness about their thoughts; in short, bare, coarse, heavy nature was therein disclosed, quite unfitted for household management, or for convictions of the heart, incredulous, lazy, filled with incessant doubts and eternal fears. These men said that it was all nonsense; that the abduction of the governor's daughter was rather the sort of thing a hussar would effect; that Tchitchikoff, a mere civilian, would not attempt it; that the women were lying; that the chief point to which attention should be directed was the dead souls, for, after all, the deuce only knew what they meant, though something very low and rascally must be concealed behind them. Why the men thought that something low and rascally was concealed behind them we shall presently learn.

A new governor-general had been appointed for the province; and his arrival, as was well known, was bound to create a state of excitement among the officials. There would be a lot of investigations, reprimands, a thorough setting to rights, and all sorts of commotion with which the chief would treat his subordinates. "Now, what will happen," thought the functionaries, "if he finds out that these stupid rumours are afloat in the town? He may on that score alone make our life too hot for us!"

The inspector of the medical institute suddenly turned pale. God knows what fancy assailed him: did not the *dead souls* signify the patients who had died in considerable numbers in the hospitals and in other places, of an epidemic, against which proper measures had not been taken? Was not Tchitchikoff some official despatched from the office of the governor-general to institute a secret investigation? He communicated this idea to the president of the court. The president retorted that that was nonsense, and then immediately turned pale himself, on putting to himself the query. What were the *dead souls* purchased by Tchitchikoff, as a matter of fact? And he, the president, had allowed the deeds of sale to be registered, and had even played the part of Pliushkin's confidential agent in the matter. That would come to the governor's ears, and what then? He had no sooner mentioned this to his friends than they all turned pale: a terror more infectious than the pest was instantly communicated to all the townsfolk. All instantly upbraided themselves for sins which they had never even committed. The words *dead souls* sounded so indefinite that they even began to suspect that they contained a hint referring to the over-hasty interment of two dead bodies, a matter of recent occurrence.

Some Solvuitchegod merchants, who had come to town for the fair, had afterwards joined in a carouse with some friends, merchants from Ustsuisolsko—a carouse on the Russian plan with orgeat, punch, cordials, and so on. This carouse had ended in a fight, as usual. The Solvuitchegod merchants killed the Ustsuisolsko merchants, although they themselves received a stout drubbing on their ribs, their flanks, and other portions of their bodies, which bore witness to the immeasurably huge fists with which the deceased had been endowed. One of the victors even had his nose split—that is to say, it was completely crushed, so that only about half a finger's length of it remained on his face. The traders had acknowledged their guilt, alleging in excuse that they had been in a kind of frenzy. Rumours then spread abroad that they had redeemed their guilty heads by the offering of four imperial bank-notes apiece: however, the affair had been wrapped in mystery. It appeared, though, from the inquest subsequently held, that the Ustsuisolsko men had died of suffocation by stove-gas, and so they were buried as persons who had been suffocated. The second instance of recent occurrence was the following: The crown-serfs of the hamlet of Vshivoi-Spyes, uniting with some serfs of the same class belonging to the hamlets of Borovka and Zadirailoff, had annihilated the rural police, sweeping them, as it were, from off the face of the earth. The alleged reason for this was, that the rural policeman suffered from weakness in the region of the heart, and gazed too attentively at the moujik's wives and daughters. However, nothing was known for a certainty; but it resulted that one of the rural policemen was eventually found dead on the highway;

his uniform, or surtout, was torn in rags, and it was impossible to recognise his face. The affair dragged through the court, and finally reached the upper tribunal, where it was at first decided in secret council to this effect: As it was not known which of the serfs had taken part in the affair, and as they were tolerably numerous; and since the policeman was dead, and the serfs were still alive, so that a decision in their favour was of very great importance to them, the matter was resolved thus: It was declared that the policeman himself had been to blame, inasmuch as he had unjustly oppressed the peasants of Vshivoi-Spyes and Zadirailoff; and it was reported that he had died of an apoplectic stroke while returning home in his sleigh.

The matter had been thoroughly disposed of, apparently; but, for some reason or other, the officials began to think that probably the question was now of these dead souls. Now it happened as if expressly, that at the very time when the officials found themselves in such embarrassing circumstances, two documents reached the governor. The contents of one of them was to the effect that, according to reports and information previously received, there was at that time in the neighbourhood a forger of bank-notes, who was hiding himself under various names, and that a strict investigation was to be immediately instituted. The other document contained a communication from the governor of a neighbouring province respecting some legal proceedings against a highway robber, and it stated that if any suspicious individual should make his appearance in that region without references or passport, he was to be instantly arrested. These two documents fairly stunned the officials. Their first conclusions and conjectures were entirely wrong. Of course it was quite impossible to suppose that this had any reference to Tchitchikoff: nevertheless, when they all came to think the matter over, each one from his own point of view, and when they recollected that, as a matter of fact, they did not in the least know who Tchitchikoff was, that he had expressed himself in a very obscure way with regard to his own person—had said, in truth, that he had suffered for the right in the service, though that was far from being explicit—and when in addition to all this, they recollected that he had even spoken of having many enemies, who went so far as to even seek his life, then they became yet more thoughtful. His life was in danger, he was persecuted, consequently he had done something, eh? And who was he, after all? Of course it was impossible to think that he made counterfeit bank-notes, much less that he could be a highwayman; his personal appearance was in his favour; but with all that, who could he in fact be?

Thus the officials now began to put to themselves the query which they should have put in the first instance—that is to say, in the first chapter of our work. It was decided to make some inquiries of those persons from whom the souls had been

purchased, in order that one might at least learn what manner of sale it had been, and what was to be understood by these dead souls, and whether our hero had not revealed to someone, unintentionally it might be, or in passing, his real intentions, and whether he had not told someone who he really was. First of all, then, the officials addressed themselves to Mrs. Korobotchka, but from her they learned little: he had bought some serfs of her for fifteen roubles, she said, and he had said that he dealt in chickens' feathers, too, and he had promised to purchase all sorts of things; and he had said he furnished tallow to the treasury, and therefore must be a rascal, for there had been one man already who bought chickens' feathers, and supplied the treasury with tallow, and he had deceived everybody, and had cheated the protopopess out of more than a hundred roubles. All that she said further was nearly a repetition of the same thing, and all that the officials perceived was that Mrs. Korobotchka was simply a stupid old woman. Maniloff replied to them that he was always ready to answer for Pavel Ivanovitch as for himself; that he would willingly sacrifice the whole of his property if he could thereby acquire the hundredth part of Pavel Ivanovitch's qualities. Altogether he expressed himself in the most flattering terms with regard to the latter, adding some reflections on friendship, which he uttered with half-closed eyes. These thoughts sufficiently exhibited, of course, the tender impulses of his heart, but they did not explain the matter in hand to the officials.

Sobakevitch, on his side, answered that, in his opinion, Tchitchikoff was a fine man; that he had sold the latter serfs for export, and that the people were alive in every sense, but that he would not answer for what might happen in the future; that if they were to die on the road, in consequence of the hardships of transportation, that would be no fault of his, and that God alone is powerful in that matter; but there are many fevers and other deadly diseases in the world, and cases had been heard of where whole villages had died off. The officials had recourse to yet another device, which is not quite honourable, but which is occasionally resorted to—that is to say, they undertook to interrogate Tchitchikoff's servants through their own lackeys, to find out whether the former knew any particulars with regard to the life and circumstances of their master; however on this side they learned nothing. All they elicited from Petrushka was a bad smell, and from Selifan that his master had "been in the service of the state in the excise department," and nothing more. A very strange custom obtains with the lower class of people in Russia: if they are questioned directly about anything, they never remember, they retain nothing whatever in their minds, and answer simply that they do not know; but if they are interrogated about something else, they drag this in, and narrate it with a multitude of details which one does not care to listen to. All the

researches carried out by the officials merely disclosed to them the fact that they knew nothing with certainty as to what Tchitchikoff was, but that nevertheless Tchitchikoff must surely be something. They eventually concluded to talk the matter over thoroughly, and to arrive at a decision as to what was to be done about it: what measures were to be taken, what our hero really was—whether he was a man whom it was necessary to detain and lay hands upon as being an evil-disposed person, or whether he was a man who could detain and lay hands upon them all as persons of evil intent. With this object, it was proposed that they should all assemble at the house of the chief of police, who is already known to the reader as the father and benefactor of the town.

CHAPTER TEN

THE RESULT IS OUR HERO'S FLIGHT

On assembling at the residence of the chief of police, the officials had occasion to remark from each other's appearance that they had all become greatly emanciated by such an amount of care and anxiety. In fact, the appointment of a new governor-general, the arrival of these documents of secret import, and all these rumours, signifying God knows what—everything had left visible traces of worry upon their countenances, and the swallow-tailed coats of many of them had grown perceptibly loose. All had yielded to the effects: the president of the court had grown thin, and the inspector of the Medical Institute had grown thin too; and a certain Semen Ivanovitch, who was never called by his family name, and who wore upon his index-finger a ring, which he allowed the ladies to look at, even he had grown thin. Of course, as is always the case, there were some of a bold cast of character, who had not lost their presence of mind; but of such there were very few indeed. The postmaster alone did not modify his usual evenness of character; and he was always accustomed to say, in such cases, "We know you, you governor-generals! There may, possibly, be three or four changes in your ranks, but I have been sitting in my place for the last thirty years, my dear sirs."

The council which had assembled on the present occasion speedily set to work, but a most incomprehensible lack of decision was evinced in the views of those who had assembled at it. One person said that Tchitchikoff forged imperial banknotes, and then he added himself, "But perhaps, no—perhaps he is not a counterfeiter." Another asserted that our hero was an official belonging to the governor-general's chancellery, and immediately added, "However, the deuce only knows what he is: you certainly can't read it on his forehead." All protested against the surmise that he might be a bandit in disguise: they considered that, in addition to his personal appearance, which was respectable in itself, there was nothing in his conversation to indicate a man given to deeds of violence. All at once the postmaster, after having remained buried in some sort of reflection for the space of several minutes—either in consequence of a sudden inspiration which had illumined his mind, or from some other cause—

unexpectedly exclaimed, "Do you know, gentlemen, who he is?" The voice in which he uttered this had something about it which caused all to exclaim simultaneously, "Who?"—"This man, gentlemen, is no other than Captain Kopyeikin!" And when all, with one voice, thereupon inquired "Who is Captain Kopyeikin?" the postmaster said, "What! you don't know who Captain Kopyeikin is?"

They all replied that they had not the least idea who Captain Kopyeikin was.

The postmaster thereupon began to relate a long story of a half-pay Russian officer, who, although he had lost an arm and a leg, had some years previously placed himself at the head of a band of robbers in the forests of Ryazan.

"But excuse me, Ivan Andreitch," said the chief of police, "you tell us that Captain Kopyeikin had lost an arm and a leg, whereas Tchitchikoff——"

Here the postmaster uttered an exclamation, and dealt himself a blow on the forehead with the full sweep of his arm, and called himself a calf publicly, in the presence of them all. He could not comprehend how such a circumstance had not occurred to his mind before, at the very beginning of his tale; and he confessed that the adage was perfectly just, "The Russian is strong in second thoughts." Nevertheless, a moment later, he began to employ craft, and tried to extricate himself by saying that mechanism had reached a high degree of perfection in England; that it was evident, from the newspapers, that a man had invented a wooden leg of such a description that, by the pressure of an imperceptible spring, such legs would bear a person God knows to what regions, so that he could never be found afterwards.

However, they all entertained strong doubts as to whether Tchitchikoff was Captain Kopyeikin, and they came to the conclusion that the postmaster's theory was too far-fetched. Still they had not hit the mark; and, led on by the postmaster's acute guesses, they wandered still farther from the truth. From among a number of hypotheses, some of which were very clever in their way, one was finally settled upon; and this, strange to say, was that Tchitchikoff was Napoleon in disguise. Now Englishmen had long been envious, because, forsooth, Russia was so great and extensive; and some caricatures had even appeared in which a Russian was depicted engaged in conversation with an Englishman. The Englishman was standing and holding a dog behind him with a cord, and, of course, the dog was understood to be Napoleon: "Look out," says the Briton, "if you don't do so-and-so, I'll set the dog on you." And here they had possibly let him loose from the island of St. Helena; and now he had made his way back to Russia in the shape of Tchitchikoff.

Of course the officials did not believe all this, but still they reflected upon it; and, on scrutinizing the matter, they were of

opinion that Tchitchikoff's face, when he turned and presented his profile to one's gaze, was very much like the portraits of Napoleon. The chief of police likewise, who had served in the campaign of 1812, and had seen Napoleon in the flesh, could not help confessing that the latter was not in the least taller than Tchitchikoff, and that the cast of Napoleon's countenance was neither too fat nor too thin. Perhaps some readers will call all this incredible, and the author is also prepared to declare it incredible to please them; but unfortunately, it all took place exactly as narrated. Moreover, it behoves us to remember that all this occurred shortly after the glorious expulsion of the French.

At that period, all our landed gentry, officials, merchants, shopmen, every man who could read and write, and even uneducated people, had been sworn politicians for at least eight years. *The Moscow News* and *The Son of the Fatherland* were mercilessly perused, and reached the last reader in tatters, which were unfit for any use whatever. Instead of the questions, "How much have you sold your oats for per measure, my dear fellow?" or, "Did you derive some slight benefit from last night's light snow?" they said, "What do the newspapers state? Has Napoleon been released from the island again?" The merchants greatly dreaded this contingency, for they put full faith in the prediction of a certain prophet who had been in jail for the last three years. This prophet had come from no one knows whence, in bast shoes and a sheepskin coat, which smelt horribly of stale fish, and had announced that Napoleon was "Antichrist," and was held fast by a strong chain behind six walls and seven seas, but that hereafter he would break the chain and obtain possession of the whole world. This prophet had been lodged in jail for his prophecy, as he deserved to be; but nevertheless, the prophecy had done its work, and the merchants were thoroughly alarmed.

For a long time afterwards, during a period of the most profitable transactions even, the merchants discussed "Antichrist" when they betook themselves to the taverns to drink their tea. Many of the officials and of the genuine nobility also involuntarily meditated upon the subject, and being inoculated with mysticism, which, as is well known, was then in high fashion, they perceived a special meaning in every letter which composed the name of Napoleon; many even discovered in it the numbers of the Apocalypse.

Thus, there was nothing surprising in the fact that the officials involuntarily meditated upon this point. However, they promptly recovered themselves, on perceiving that their fancies were carrying them along too rapidly, and that this was no solution as regards our hero. They thought and they talked, and finally they decided that it would not be a bad idea to question Nozdreff thoroughly, as he had been the first to start the story of the dead souls, and stood, as they said, in intimate relations to Tchitchikoff; consequently, he must know something of the

circumstances of our friend's life, and an effort must be made to see what he had to say.

So the chief of police wrote Nozdreff a note on the instant, inviting him for the evening; and a policeman in cavalry-boots, with an attractive bloom upon his cheeks, proceeded immediately, with hasty steps, and holding up his sword, to Nozdreff's lodgings. Nozdreff was engaged with a matter of importance; for four whole days he had neither emerged from his apartments nor admitted anyone to them, but had received his food through the window, and had even grown pale and green. His business demanded the greatest attention; it consisted in selecting from several gross of cards a single pack, the most suitable one upon which one might rely as upon a faithful friend. There was work enough still to last two weeks, and during the whole of this period Porfiriy was to clean the bull-pup with a certain small brush, and to wash him three times a day in soap and water. Nozdreff was greatly incensed at having his solitude intruded upon; first he consigned the policeman to the Devil, but when he had read in the chief of police's note that a harvest might be expected, since some novice or other was to be at the evening gathering, he instantly calmed down, hastily locked up his room, dressed himself in the first clothes that came to hand, and set out.

Nozdreff's disposition, testimony, and surmises presented such a sharp contrast with those of the officials that the guesses of the latter were upset. This fellow was decidedly a man for whom there existed no doubts whatever, and in exact proportion as they exhibited hesitation and timidity, did he display firmness and confidence. He replied to all points without even hesitating, declared that Tchitchikoff had purchased dead souls to the number of several thousands, and that he himself had sold some to him, because he did not see any reason why he should not sell them. To the question, Was not Tchitchikoff a spy, and was he not attempting to find out something? Nozdreff replied that he had already been a spy in their school-days, that he had been called the "attorney-general," and that his comrades (including himself) had hustled him about so much that it had been necessary to apply two hundred and forty leeches to one of his temples—that is, he had meant to say forty; the mention of the two hundred had popped out of its own accord. To the question, Was Tchitchikoff a counterfeiter? he replied that he was; and, in that connection, he related an anecdote to illustrate Tchitchikoff's remarkable cleverness—how the authorities, on learning that he had two million roubles' worth of counterfeit bank-notes in his house, had sealed up the building, and set a guard of two soldiers at every door, and how Tchitchikoff had changed the notes in the course of one night, so that, when the seals were removed on the following day, it was seen that they were all genuine. To the question, Did Tchitchikoff really intend to kidnap the governor's daughter, and was it true that he himself had under-

taken to assist and take part in the enterprise? Nozdreff replied that he had assisted, and that, if it had not been for him, nothing would have come of it. Here he tried to catch himself up, perceiving that he had lied quite unnecessarily, and that he might by this mistake call down misfortune on his head; however he could not possibly restrain his tongue.

Moreover, it was difficult to do so, as such interesting details presented themselves that he could by no means keep silent: he even mentioned the name of the village where was situated the parish church in which the marriage was arranged to take place; namely, the village of Trukhmatchevka: the pope's name, he said, was Father Sidor; seventy-five roubles was the price to be paid for the service; and the pope would not have consented had he not frightened him by threatening to denounce him for having married Mikhail, the flour-dealer, to his fellow-godparent;* that he had even surrendered his own calash, and had prepared relays of horses at all the stations. These lying particulars extended even to the point of mentioning the names of the postboys. An attempt was made to drop a word about Napoleon, but the officials repented of their effort; for Nozdreff furnished them with such a pack of nonsense, destitute of even the slightest semblance of truth, that they all departed, sighing; the postmaster alone continued to listen for a long while, thinking that there might, at least, be something more; but finally even he waved his hand and said, "The deuce knows what it's all about!" And they all of them agreed that, struggle with a bull as much as you like, you will never get any milk from him.

So the officials were left in a worse position than before, and they could not settle in the least who Tchitchikoff was.

Tchitchikoff knew nothing whatever of all this. It seemed to happen expressly, that he took a slight cold at that very time, —one of those colds in the head with a slight swelling in the throat, in the distribution of which the climate of many of our provincial towns is extremely lavish. In order that his life might not be cut short, without posterity, which God forbid, he decided that it would be better to keep to his room for two or three days. During these few days he gargled his throat with a decoction of milk and figs, which he afterwards ate; and he wore a little poultice of camomile and camphor bound upon his cheek. As he was desirous of occupying his time in some way, he prepared new and detailed lists of the peasants whom he had recently purchased; and he even read a volume of the *Duchess de La Vallière*, which he had rummaged out of his trunk; looked over divers notes, and other objects in his dressing-case, read his papers over a second time, in a perfunctory way, and felt greatly bored by everything.

He could not in the least understand what it meant, that not one of the city officials had come even once to inquire after his

* Godparents are not allowed to marry in the Greek Church.

health, whereas, only a short time before, drozhkies had stood constantly in front of the inn—now the postmaster's, now the procurator's, and, again, that belonging to the president of the court. He merely shrugged his shoulders as he walked about the room. At length he felt better, and God knows how he rejoiced when he perceived the possibility of going out into the fresh air once more. He set about his toilet without delay, opened his dressing-case, poured some hot water into a glass, took out his brush and soap, and prepared to shave himself; and, by the way, it was high time that he did so, for, on feeling his chin with his hand, and looking in the glass, he ejaculated, "Eh! what a forest has sprung up!" And in fact, it was not a forest, but all over his cheeks and chin a tolerably thick stubble had planted itself. After shaving himself, he set so briskly to work with his toilet, that he nearly leaped out of his trousers. At last he was dressed; and sprinkled with *eau-de-Cologne*, and warmly wrapped up, he emerged into the street, after having muffled up his face as a measure of precaution.

His re-appearance on the scene was really a festive occasion, as it is with every convalescent. Everything which he encountered assumed a smiling aspect—the houses, the passing moujiks, who were really quite gloomy, however, and one of whom had just succeeded in dealing a comrade a blow on the ear. He intended that his first call should be for the governor. All sorts of thoughts occurred to him on the way: the pretty little blonde was whirling in his brain; his fancy even began to grow somewhat uncontrollable, and he had already begun to jest and to laugh at himself a little. It was in this frame of mind that he found himself in front of the entrance to the governor's house. He was already in the act of hastily throwing off his cloak in the vestibule, when the porter astounded him with the utterly unexpected words, "Not receiving!"

"How? What do you mean? You evidently do not recognise me. Take a good look at my face!" said Tchitchikoff.

"Not know you, indeed! Why, this is not the first time I ever saw you," retorted the porter. "It is precisely you out of all the rest whom I have received orders not to admit: everyone else can enter."

"You don't say so! Why, what's the reason?"

"Those are my orders, and it's as it should be, evidently," said the porter, and he added the words "so there." After which he stood before Tchitchikoff in a negligent attitude, and without preserving that courteous mien with which he had always hitherto removed our hero's cloak. It seemed as though he were thinking, as he gazed at him, "Oho! Since the master drives you from his door, you must be some sort of a scamp!"

"Incomprehensible," thought Tchitchikoff to himself, and he went straight to the president of the court; but the president of the court was thrown into such confusion at the sight of him

that he could not put two words together, and uttered such nonsense that they both felt ashamed. Try as he would, on leaving, to explain the matter, and to discover what the president meant, and to what his words referred, Tchitchikoff could not understand anything.

Then he called on the others—the chief of police, the vice-governor, and the postmaster; but they either did not receive him at all, or received him so strangely, conducted the conversation in such a constrained and incomprehensible way, were so abstracted, and everything turned out so ridiculously, that he began to doubt whether their brains were in a normal condition. He made an attempt to approach someone, in order at least to discover the cause of all this; but he did not discover it. He wandered aimlessly through the town, like a man only half awake, and quite incapable of deciding whether his wits had forsaken him, whether the officials had lost their heads, whether all this was happening in a dream, or what. It was late, almost twilight, in fact, when he returned to his inn, whence he had emerged in such an agreeable frame of mind, and ordered tea to be brought, out of sheer dulness. He had begun thoughtfully pouring out his tea, absorbed in a sort of meditation as to the peculiarity of his position, when the door of his chamber suddenly opened, and Nozdreff stood before him in a wholly unexpected manner.

"What says the proverb? Seven versts is the immediate neighbourhood to friends!" remarked Nozdreff, doffing his cap: "As I was passing by, I espy a light in your window. 'Come!' I think to myself, 'I'll go in! he certainly can't be asleep.' And it's a good thing that you have some tea on the table: I'll drink a cup with pleasure. I had all sorts of vile stuff for dinner to-day, and I feel a row beginning in my stomach. Order a pipe to be filled for me. Where's your pipe?"

"I don't smoke a pipe," said Tchitchikoff.

"Stuff! As if I didn't know that you were a smoker. Hey, there! What's his name? what do you call your man? Hey, there, Vakhramei, listen!"

"His name is not Vakhramei, but Petrushka."

"What? Well, you used to have a Vakhramei?"

"I never had a Vakhramei."

"Yes, exactly: it was Derebin who had a Vakhramei. Fancy what luck Derebin has: his aunt has quarrelled with her son because he has married a serf-girl, and now she has bequeathed all her property to Derebin. Thinks I to myself, 'If I only had an aunt like that, even a distant one!' But what's the matter with you, my dear fellow, that you have been keeping aloof from everybody, and have not been anywhere? Of course I know that you are occasionally engaged in learned pursuits, that you are fond of reading." (From what premises Nozdreff drew his conclusions that Tchitchikoff occupied himself with learned subjects, and that he was fond of reading, we cannot in

the least divine, and Tchitchikoff still less.) "Ah, brother Tchitchikoff! if you only knew, it really would furnish food for your satirical humour." (Why Tchitchikoff had a satirical mind is also unknown.) "Fancy, my dear fellow, they were playing at *gorka* at the house of Likhatcheff, the merchant: that's where the laugh comes in! Perependeff was with me. 'Look here,' says he, 'if Tchitchikoff were here now, this would just suit him!'" (Tchitchikoff, by the way, had never known any Perependeff in his life.) "And confess, my dear fellow, that you behaved very meanly, you know, when—when you played that game of draughts with me. For I won. Yes, my dear fellow, you simply diddled me. But the deuce knows, I can't cherish ill-will. The other day, at the president of the court's—but stop! I must tell you, that the whole town is arrayed against you. They think that you make counterfeit money, and have appealed to me; but I defended you with all my might. I told them that I had been to school with you, and knew your father: well, there's no use in particularising, but I told a lot of lies."

"I make counterfeit money!" shrieked Tchitchikoff, springing from his chair.

"But why did you frighten them so?" went on Nozdreff. "The deuce knows, they nearly went out of their minds with terror: they made you out to be a spy and a highwayman. And the procurator has died of fright: his funeral will take place to-morrow. You won't attend it, eh? To tell the truth, they are afraid of a new governor-general. But you have certainly undertaken a very risky business, Tchitchikoff."

"What risky business?" inquired Tchitchikoff uneasily.

"Why, the abduction of the governor's daughter. I must confess that I expected it: by heavens, I expected it! The very first time when I saw you together at the ball, 'Well, now,' I thought to myself, 'Tchitchikoff is not doing that for nothing!' But it's useless for you to make such a choice: I can't see anything pretty about her. Still, there is one girl worth having, a relative of Bikusoff's, his sister's daughter; and such a girl, too! One may really call her a wonderful piece of calico!"

"But what are you saying? What crack-brained affair is this? What do you mean by abducting the governor's daughter?" said Tchitchikoff, staring with all his eyes.

"Come, enough of that, my dear fellow! What a reserved man you are! I admit that I came to you about this very matter: I am ready to assist you if you like. So be it: I will hold the crown over you,* the calash and relays of horses shall be my care, but on one condition—that you will lend me three thousand roubles. I must have them, my dear fellow, or cut my throat."

While Nozdreff was rattling on in this strain, Tchitchikoff

* Crowns are held above the heads of the bride and bridegroom during the marriage ceremony in the Greek Church.

wiped his eyes several times, with a desire to convince himself whether he was listening to all this in a dream. The manufacture of counterfeit bank-notes; the abduction of the governor's daughter; the death of the procurator, of which he was said to be the cause; the arrival of a governor-general—all this produced a tolerably violent alarm in his breast. "Well, if it has come to this," he thought to himself, "there's no time to waste; I must get away from here as speedily as possible."

He then got rid of Nozdreff as promptly as he could, summoned Selifan at once, and ordered him to be ready at daybreak, so that they might leave town at six o'clock on the next morning, without fail; everything was to be thoroughly inspected, the britchka greased, and so forth, and so forth. Selifan ejaculated, "I obey you, Pavel Ivanovitch!" but all the same he halted for some time motionless at the door. Our hero then immediately commanded Petrushka to pull out his trunk from under the bed—where it was covered with dust—and together they immediately set to work packing it with socks, shirts, linen, both clean and soiled, boot-jacks, and calendars, all of which were thrown in as they came to hand, without much attempt at arrangement. Our hero wanted to be ready that evening without fail, in order that no delay might occur on the following morning. After standing for a couple of minutes at the door, Selifan had slowly left the room. Slowly, as slowly as it is possible to conceive of, he descended the staircase, imprinting traces of his wet boots on the well-worn steps, and in his surprise he scratched the back of his head with his hand for a long time thereafter.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

DEPARTURE ON FRESH ENTERPRISES

EVERYTHING was to have been ready at daybreak, and at 6 a.m. Tchitchikoff was to have passed through the city gates. Nothing, however, happened as he had anticipated. In the first place, he woke up later than he had intended: this was the first unpleasantness. On rising, he immediately sent to learn whether his britchka was harnessed, and whether all was in readiness; but it was reported to him that the britchka was not yet harnessed, and that nothing was ready: this was the second unpleasantness. He then flew into a rage, and even made preparations to administer a sound thrashing to our friend Selifan, merely waiting, in impatience, until the latter should allege some excuse in his own defence. Selifan soon made his appearance at the door, and his master had the pleasure of listening to the discourses which masters generally hear from their servants whenever it is necessary for one to set out in haste.

"It will be necessary to have the horses shod, Pavel Ivanovitch."

"Ah, you young pig! O you blockhead! Why didn't you say so before? Wasn't there time?"

"Yes, there was plenty of time. And there's the wheel, too, Pavel Ivanovitch: the tire will have to be replaced, for the roads are full of ruts now, and there will be a great strain on it everywhere. And I wanted to report that the dashboard is all rickety, so that it will probably not last for two stages."

"You villain!" shouted Tchitchikoff, wringing his hands, and approaching the servant so closely that Selifan retreated, for fear that he might receive a blow from his master.

"Have you sworn to murder me? hey?" shouted our hero. "Do you wish to cut my throat? Yes, have you made up your mind to cut my throat on the highway, you bandit, you hog, you marine scarecrow? hey? hey? We have been settled here three weeks, haven't we, hey? And you never gave a hint, you good-for-nothing, of all this, and now you bring it out at the last moment, when we're almost on the very point of starting! You meant to mount and set out, did you, hey? And you concealed it, hey, hey? Of course you knew it all before? You knew it, hey? hey? Answer me! You knew it, hey?"

"I knew it," replied Selifan, dropping his head.

"Then why didn't you say so, hey?"

To this question Selifan made no reply, but he seemed to be saying to himself, as he stood with drooping head, "Just see how nasty it has all turned out; I knew it, and like a stupid I did not tell it."

"Now go and fetch the blacksmith," retorted our hero, "and let everything be finished in two hours. Do you hear? in two hours without fail; and if it is not, I'll give you, I'll—I'll twist you into a horn—I'll tie you up in a knot!" As will be seen by this language our hero was deeply incensed.

Selifan turned to the door, with the intention of carrying out his instructions; but suddenly he halted, and said, "One thing more. That piebald horse ought to be sold, Pavel Ivanovitch, for he's a regular villain: he's such a horse, that if you keep him—may God protect us from mishap, that's all I say!"

"Yes! Of course I'll go—I'll run to the market, and sell him!"

"By Heavens, Pavel Ivanovitch, he's only fine in appearance. In reality, he's the most vicious horse I know; such a horse is worth nothing."

"You idiot! When I want to sell him, I'll sell him. You have set to arguing again, I see! I'll attend to that. If you don't fetch the blacksmith instantly, and if everything is not ready in two hours, I'll give you such a thrashing that you won't be able to look yourself in the face afterwards! Go! march!" Thereupon Selifan left the room.

Tchitchikoff broke into a violent rage, and flung down the sword which he carried about with him on his journeys, for the purpose of inspiring fear whenever necessary. He excited himself with the blacksmith for about a quarter of an hour before he came to terms; for all blacksmiths are barefaced rogues, and this one, on perceiving that despatch was required, demanded six times the worth of the job. Rage as our hero would; call him villain, thief, a robber of travellers; hint as he would of the Day of Judgment—the blacksmith would not yield in the least: he thoroughly maintained his character, and not only refused to abate the price, but even loitered over the work for five hours and a half instead of two.

During this interval our friend had the satisfaction of passing through those agreeable moments, familiar to every traveller, when everything is packed up in his trunks, and when only some bits of cord and paper, and a variety of rubbish is strewn about his room—when he neither belongs to the road nor to home, but gazes from his window upon the passers-by threading their way along, discussing or thinking over their money affairs, and raising their eyes in stupid curiosity at him, and then, after one glance, pursuing their road. Everything in existence—everything that he beholds—the little shop opposite his window, and

the old woman who lives in the house over the way, and who approaches her short-curtained window to look at him—everything is hateful to him; still he does not retreat from his own window. There he stands, now shivering, again directing his troubled attention upon everything before him; and in his vexation at having to wait, he crushes perchance a fly which has been buzzing and beating against the pane, just beneath his finger.

But there is an end to all things, and with our hero the longed-for moment at last arrived; all was ready; the dashboard of the britchka had been properly repaired, the wheel was provided with a new tire, the horses were led back from the watering-trough, and the rascally blacksmiths had taken their departure, counting their silver roubles, and wishing our friend a good journey as they went. At length the britchka was packed; two hot *kalatchi*,* just purchased, were put in; and Selifan had already thrust something for himself into his pocket, as he sat on the box. Finally our hero seated himself in his equipage; while the waiter of the inn, clad in his stout cotton surtout, waved his cap; and the hackeys, coachmen, and others who had assembled gazed at the departure of the strange gentleman. Then, amid all the other incidents which accompany an exit, the britshka, which had remained for so long a time in the town, and which has possibly so greatly wearied the reader, emerged from the gate of the inn.

"Glory to God!" thought Tchitchikoff, and he crossed himself. Selifan cracked his whip; Petrushka mounted beside him, after first humping on the step for awhile; and our hero, installing himself as comfortably as possible, and wrapping himself in his Georgian rug, placed a leather pillow behind his back, and closely hugged the hot meat pies. The equipage began dancing and jolting about, owing to the pavement, which, seemingly, possessed a power of projection. Our hero gazed with undefined feelings at the houses, the garden-walls, and the streets, which, on their side, seemed to leap as they retreated slowly behind him, and which, perchance, he would never behold again during the whole course of his existence.

As they turned into a fresh street, the britchka was forced to come to a halt, for an interminable funeral procession was passing along. Tchitchikoff thrust out his head, and ordered Petrushka to inquire who was being buried, and he learned that it was the procurator. Full of unpleasant feelings he promptly hid himself in a corner, covered himself with his rug, and drew the curtain. When the equipage was thus brought to a standstill, Selifan and Petrushka, reverently removing their hats, took observations as to who were there, in and on what they rode, and how many of them there were in all, including both foot-mourners and persons in carriages. Their master, after giving them strict

* Meat patties.

orders not to recognise anyone, or to salute any of their lackey friends, also began peeping through the small pane of glass which was set in his leather curtain.

Behind the coffin marched all the officials, with their heads bare. He began to fear that they might recognise his equipage, but they were not thinking of that. They did not even engage in those various worldly discussions, such as the people who accompany a corpse generally indulge in. Their minds were centred upon themselves at that juncture of affairs: they were wondering what sort of a person the new governor-general would be, how he would take hold of matters, and how he would treat them. After the officials, who were on foot, followed some coaches, from which gazed ladies in mourning caps. It was obvious, from the movements of their lips and hands, that they were engaged in a brisk conversation: possibly they also were discussing the coming of the new governor-general, enunciating hypotheses with regard to the balls which he would give, and also worrying about their everlasting scallops and gimp.

After the coaches followed several empty drozhkies in single file, till finally no more remained, and our hero could proceed. He heaved a sigh of relief as he parted the leather curtains, and heartily ejaculated, "So that's the procurator! He has lived, and now he has died; and now they will print in the newspapers that he died regretted by his subordinates and by all mankind, a respected citizen, a wonderful father, a model husband; and soon they will no doubt add that he was accompanied to his grave by the tears of widows and orphans; but, in sooth, when one comes to examine the matter thoroughly, all one will find in confirmation of these statements is that he had wonderfully thick eyebrows!" At this juncture our friend ordered Selifan to drive on as rapidly as possible; and then he said to himself, "It's as well, on the whole, that we met the funeral procession: they say that it presages good luck to meet a corpse."

Meanwhile the britchka had turned into some more deserted streets: soon only some long dark wooden fences stretched out on both sides, heralding the city limits. And then the pavement came to an end, and the barriers and the town were left behind. Now, there is nothing more before them, and they are again on the high road. And again, on either side, huge stones mark the versts; there are the supervisors of post-stations to be seen together with wells, peasants' carts, grey hamlets, brisk women, and bearded men running from the post-houses with bags of oats in their hands. A pedestrian in bast shoes, worn into holes, who has wandered eight hundred versts, is met; then come little towns, nicely built, with tiny wooden shops containing barrels of flour, bast shoes, meat-pies, and other trifles; then there are bridges and fields stretching as far as the eye can reach. The antique equipages of the landed gentry come along; next appears a soldier mounted on a horse, and carrying a green coffer with

a leaden plate, which bears the inscription, "Such-and-such a battery of artillery"; strips of land, green, yellow, and black, are visible here and there on the steppe; songs resound afar; crests of pine-trees peer forth amid the mist; the tolling of a bell dies away in the distance; crows fly across the sky as plentiful as flies, and beyond these stretches an illimitable horizon.

As our friend Tchitchikoff drove along he indulged in sundry day-dreams. At the outset he felt nothing, and only gazed behind him, desirous of assuring himself that he had really emerged from the town; but when he saw that the town had long since disappeared from view, that neither a smithy, a mill, nor any of those things which are found in the vicinity of towns was visible, that even the white steeples of the stone churches had, as it were, long since sunk into the earth, he devoted his attention to the road alone, glancing to right and left. The town of N—— became in his memory as though it had never existed—as though he had merely passed through it long, long ago, in the days of his childhood. At length, even the road ceased to occupy him; and he began to close his eyes, and to recline upon his pillow. The author is glad that such was the case, since it affords him an opportunity to speak of his hero; for so far, as the reader has seen, he has been constantly hindered in this design—now by Nozdreff, now by balls, then by the ladies, then by the town gossip—in short, by a thousand of those matters which seem mere trifles when transferred to a book, but which are regarded as extremely important affairs when they actually take place. But we will now lay them completely on one side, and occupy ourselves with our hero's antecedents.

His origin was obscure and modest. His parents belonged to the nobility, but whether to the ancient aristocracy or to the nobility by right of office, God only knows. He did not resemble them in features: at all events, a female relative who was present at his birth exclaimed, as she took him in her arms, "He has not turned out at all as I expected! He ought to look like his grandmother on his mother's side, and it would have been better so; but he has been born just as the proverb says, neither like mother nor like father, but like some passing youth."

Life gazed rather sourly and unpleasantly on him at first, through a dim little window with the snow piled against it: he had neither friend nor comrade in his childhood. A tiny room, with little windows which were opened neither in winter nor in summer; his invalid father in a long surtout lined with lamb-skin, and knitted slippers, who sighed incessantly as he paced up and down and spat in the sand-box in the corner: interminable sittings on a form with a pen in his hand, and ink on both his fingers and his lips; the constantly repeated precept, "Never lie, but obey your elders, and bear your benefactor in your heart"; a never-ceasing scraping and scuffling about the room; a familiar but always surly voice, "You have been at your pranks again!"

which echoed through the apartment whenever, weary of the monotony of work, he added some flourish or tail to a letter; and an equally familiar and always unpleasant sensation, when these words were followed by the twisting of his ears—behold here the dismal picture of his childhood and early youth, of which his memory barely retained a faint image.

But everything in life is subject to sudden and lively changes: and one day, with the first spring sunshine and shower, the father took his son, and set out with him in a telyéga, drawn by a gaunt piebald horse. The coachman who drove this animal was a little humpback, the head of the only family of serfs owned by Tchitchikoff's father, and who occupied himself with nearly all the duties of the household. They drove along with the piebald for more than a day and a half; they passed the night on the road, crossed a river, lunched on some cold meat-pie and roast mutton, and only reached the city on the morning of the third day.

Before the boy's eyes shone the streets of the city in unexpected splendour, making him keep his mouth open for several minutes. The piebald, in company with the telyéga, tumbled into a hole near a narrow alley, which inclined downwards and was blocked up with mud; then for a long time the animal laboured there with all its might, splashed about with its legs, aided by the hunchback, and even the master himself, and finally they reached a small courtyard, with two dilapidated apple-trees in front of a little old house with a narrow back garden, planted only with wild cherry-trees and lilacs, and concealing in its depths a wooden sentry-box which was full of rubbish, and had a dim, narrow window.

In this house dwelt a relative of theirs, a little withered-up old woman, who still went to market every morning, and afterwards dried her stockings on her samovar. She tapped the little lad on the cheek, and admired his plumpness. With her he was to remain, whilst attending the classes every day at the college of the town. His father passed the night there, and set out homewards on the following day. No tears were shed by his parent when they parted: the boy was given half a rouble in copper as pocket-money, and, what is much more important, some very wise advice: "Look here, Pavlusha, study well, don't be stupid, and don't play tricks," said his father. "Most of all, please your teachers and your superiors. If you please your teachers, you will get into the right road and distance all the others, even if you do not succeed in the sciences, and even if God has not endowed you with any talent. Don't associate with your comrades, they will teach you no good; but if it must be so, then associate with those who are the wealthiest and who can be of the most service to you in case of need. Do not make any presents, nor treat anyone, but rather behave so that others may give you presents. Save all you can: that is the surest recipe in the world. Your friends or comrades would

cheat you, and in adversity they would be the first to betray you; but money will never betray you, no matter in what straits you may be. You can do everything, you can accomplish anything in the world, with money." After bestowing this advice upon our hero, his father took leave of him, and dragged himself home again, behind his piebald. From that day forth Tchitchikoff never beheld his parent again; but his words and exhortations had sunk deep into his soul.

Pavlusha began to attend the classes on the very next day. He did not appear to have any especial capacity for any particular branch of learning; he merely distinguished himself by his diligence and cleanliness; but, in compensation, he exhibited great talents in another direction—that of practical life. He divined or comprehended a matter on the instant, and conducted himself in such a manner that his comrades actually did give him presents; and he not only never gave *them* any, but sometimes he even hoarded up their gifts, and afterwards sold them back to them.

While still a child, he learned how to deny himself everything. He did not spend a copeck of the half-rouble which his father had given him: on the contrary, he made an addition to it that same year, which displayed uncommon skill. He moulded a bullfinch out of some wax, coloured it, and sold it at a good profit. Then, in the course of time, he entered into other speculations, and this is what they consisted in: he purchased some eatables in the market, seated himself in the class near those who had the most money, and as soon as he observed one of his companions growing weary—which was a sign of approaching hunger—he thrust some gingerbread or a roll into his hand, under the form, as though by accident; having thus incited his schoolfellow, he demanded payment in proportion to his appetite. For two months also he toiled in his own quarters in training a mouse, which he had shut up in a little wooden cage; and at length he succeeded to such a degree, that the mouse stood on its hind legs, lay down, and rose up at the word of command; and then he sold it in an advantageous manner. When he had amassed money to the amount of five roubles or so, he made a little bag for it, and began to hoard up his cash.

He behaved with even more sagacity in the case of his superiors. No one knew how to sit upon a form more quietly than he. It must here be remarked that his teacher was a great lover of quietness and good conduct, and that he could not endure the clever and witty boys; it seemed to him as though they must infallibly be laughing at him. It sufficed for any youngster, who had caused himself to be remarked for cleverness, to make the slightest movement, or unintentionally contract his eyebrows, for the teacher to fall suddenly upon him. He would persecute and punish the youngster unmercifully. "I'll drive the conceit and disobedience out of you, my lad!" he said: "I know

you through and through, better than you know yourself. Here, go down on your knees to me! You shall go hungry!" And the poor boy would have to rub his knees, and fast for twenty-four hours, without knowing why. "Capacity and talent! that's all nonsense!" the master was wont to say: "I only look at conduct. I will give full marks in all the branches to the boy who does not even know the first letter of the alphabet, provided he behaves himself in a praiseworthy way; and I'll give bad marks to the boy in whom I perceive an inclination to ridicule or an evil disposition, even although he could grasp Solon by the belt and throw him."

Thus spoke this teacher, who to the day of his death never loved Kruiloff,* because the latter had said, "Drink if you be so inclined, but attend to study and business." This teacher was always relating with glee that in the academy where he had ruled before he came to that school, such silence reigned that you could hear the flies fly about; and, he added, that not one of the pupils, the whole year round, ever coughed or blew his nose in school-time; in fact, it was impossible to tell whether there was anyone in the room or not.

Tchitchikoff quickly caught the teacher's spirit, and his idea as to what constituted good behaviour. He never moved an eye or an eyebrow all the time that the class lasted, no matter how much the others might pinch him behind. As soon as the bell rang, he rushed headlong so as to be the first to hand the teacher his three-cornered hat, for the teacher wore one of that description. And then our hero was the first to leave the class-room, and contriving to encounter the master three times on the way, he pulled off his cap repeatedly. These manœuvres were completely successful. During the whole of his stay at that school, he received excellent marks; and on leaving it, he obtained a certificate of thorough acquirements in all branches of knowledge, and a book, with an inscription in gilt letters, "for exemplary diligence and admirable conduct."

On emerging from the academy, he found himself a youth of sufficiently attractive personal appearance, and with a chin which required shaving. At this juncture his father died. His inheritance proved to consist of four badly-worn waistcoats, two ancient surtouts lined with lambskin, and an insignificant sum of money. Evidently his father had not been expert in accumulating copecks. Tchitchikoff sold the venerable little house and the insignificant bit of land attached to it for a thousand roubles, and transported his seven serfs to town, with the intention of settling there and entering the official service.

At this juncture the poor teacher—the lover of silence and laudable conduct—was turned out of the academy for stupidity, or for some other fault. Then in grief he began to drink, and at length he had no money to purchase any liquor with: ill,

* A famous Russian writer of fables.

without a mouthful of bread, or any assistance, he descended very low, to some God-forsaken, unwarmed kennel. His former pupils, the clever and brilliant ones, in whom he had continually detected disobedience and conceited behaviour, on learning of his pitiable condition, immediately collected some money for him, selling several things of their own for that purpose. Pavlusha Tchitchikoff alone declined to give anything, on the score of poverty, though at last he offered a five-copeck silver piece, which his comrades instantly flung away, saying, "Oh you miser!" The poor teacher covered his face with his hands when he heard of such an act on the part of his former pupils; tears poured from his dim eyes in a torrent, as though he had been a weak child. "God has brought me to tears on my death-bed!" he exclaimed, in a feeble voice; and he sighed heavily on hearing about Tchitchikoff, and immediately added, "Ah, Pavlusha! How a man changes! Surely he was very well behaved! There was nothing boisterous about him—he was like silk. Ah! he deceived me, deceived me!"

It is impossible to assert, however, that our hero's nature was so grim and harsh, that his feelings were dulled to such a degree, that he knew neither pity nor sympathy; he felt both the one and the other: he was even desirous of assisting the teacher, only not to the extent of a considerable sum of money, lest he might have to encroach upon the hoard which he had made up his mind not to touch. In short, his father's exhortation, "Save and amass money," had been of some avail. He had no actual love for money for the sake of money itself: he was not actuated by miserliness and greed. No, but life gleamed before his eyes, with all its pleasures, with all its possibilities: equipages, a handsomely mounted establishment, savoury dinners—it was all that which was constantly passing through his brain. So as to secure in the course of time all these things without fail, he saved up his money, denying it to himself and to others for a space. When a wealthy man drove past him in an elegant drozhky, with trotters in rich harness, he halted as though rooted to the spot; and when he came to himself, as though after a long dream, he said, "And that man was formerly a shop-clerk, and wore his hair cut in a ring!"* Everything which smacked of wealth or ease produced upon our hero an impression which was inexplicable, even to himself.

On leaving the academy, he did not even care to take a holiday, so strong within him was his desire to set to work and enter the service. Nevertheless, in spite of his laudatory credentials, he had great difficulty in obtaining a situation in the department of justice. Even in the most remote corners of the land, influence is required. At last he obtained an insignificant little place: the salary was only thirty or forty roubles a year. But

* Referring to the circular mode of cutting the hair among low-class Russians.

he resolved to apply himself ardently to his duties, to conquer and to overcome everything. And in fact, he displayed great self-sacrifice and patience, and incredible economy even as regards the necessaries of life. From early morning until late at night he wrote, straining every power of mind and body, and wholly absorbed in the duties of his post. He did not go home, he slept on the tables in the office; he sometimes took his meals with the watchmen; and withal, he managed to remain clean, to dress respectably, to communicate a pleasant expression to his face, and something even noble to his movements.

It must be stated that the officials in the department of justice were especially distinguished for their lack of comeliness and for their deficiency of understanding. Some of them had faces looking exactly like badly baked bread: one fellow's cheeks were swollen, another's chin was twisted up, the upper lip of a third had swollen like a bladder, and burst; in short, such faces were not handsome at all. They all spoke, too, in a surly way, in voices which seemed to indicate that they were on the point of beating someone; and they frequently sacrificed to Bacchus, thus demonstrating that a large remnant of heathendom still lingers in the nature of the Slav. At times they even entered the offices in a drunken condition, which rendered the offices unpleasant, and the air anything but aromatic.

Among such officials Tchitchikoff could not fail to attract attention and to be distinguished from the rest, presenting, as he did, a complete contrast, both as to his comely countenance, the courtesy of his voice, and his entire abstinence from all strong liquors. Yet, despite all this, his path was a thorny one. He had fallen upon a superior who was very antiquated in his customs, who prided himself on his stony insensibility; and who was eternally the same, always unapproachable. Never in his life had a smile dawned on his face, never had he once greeted anyone with an inquiry as to his health. No one had ever beheld him otherwise, whether in the street or at his own house; never once had he shown any interest in anything. Ah! if he had only drunk himself drunk for once, and in his intoxication had indulged in a laugh! if he had but yielded to a little wild mirth, such as a brigand indulges in, in a moment of intoxication! But there was no prospect of anything of that kind happening, there was neither vice nor goodness in him, and this utter absence of failings and qualities produced an odd impression. His marble-like countenance, which lacked any striking irregularity, hinted at no resemblance to anyone or anything else; his features were harshly symmetrical and covered with numerous pock-marks, so that it was said that the Devil came by night to grind his peas on his countenance.

It seemed as though it were not in the power of mortal man to insinuate himself into the good graces of such a person, but Tchitchikoff made the experiment. At first he began by pleasing

him in all sorts of insignificant trifles: he looked carefully after the mending of his pens, and laid them close to his hand; he blew and swept all the spilt sand and tobacco from his superior's table, he brought him a fresh rag for his ink-bottle; he hunted up his hat for him—the shabbiest hat that ever existed in this world—and on each occasion laid it at his elbow at the very moment when the office closed; he brushed his back if it had become dirty through contact with the whitening on the walls. But all this passed by absolutely unnoticed, as though nothing of the sort had been done. At length Tchitchikoff got wind of his superior's home and family life: he learned that he had a marriageable daughter, who also possessed one of those faces which looked as though peas had been ground upon it, and he meditated making an attack in that quarter.

Having found out what church she attended on Sundays, he placed himself right opposite her every week, cleanly dressed, with a well-starched shirt-front; and the manœuvre was a success: the grim chief wavered, and invited him to tea. Then before they had time to look about them in the office, Tchitchikoff had transferred himself to the chief's house, had become necessary, indispensable to him. He purchased his flour and sugar; he behaved to the daughter as though she were his betrothed; called the chief "papa," and kissed his hand. Everyone in the chancellery came to the conclusion that the wedding would take place at the end of February, before the beginning of the long fast. The stern head of the department even began to interest himself on Tchitchikoff's behalf with the authorities and in a short time our hero was given a vacant appointment which had been discovered. This, to all appearances, was the principal object of his connection with his superior; for his trunk was immediately and clandestinely removed from the latter's house, and on the following day he was settled in new quarters. He ceased to call the chief "papa," and no longer kissed his hand; the subject of the marriage, too, was dropped, as though there had never existed any idea of such a thing. However, he once met the old gentleman, and, pressing his hand in a flattering way, he invited him to tea; so that the old chief, in spite of his eternal immobility and hard indifference, shook his head every time that he thought of it, and muttered to himself. "He cheated me, he deceived me, that son of the Devil!"

This was the most difficult threshold which our hero stepped across. From that time on, he progressed more easily and with more success. He became a man of note. He appeared to have every quality which is adapted to this world—an agreeable way of dealing with people, and suitable boldness in handling matters of business. By these means, he shortly gained what is called a lucrative position, and availed himself of it in the most superior manner. The reader must be informed that, at that time, the strictest prosecution was instituted for every description of bribe-taking. This did not alarm our hero, however; he immediately

proceeded to turn it to his own account, displaying thereby genuine Russian ingenuity, which only shows itself in cases of emergency. This is how he arranged matters. As soon as a petitioner made his appearance and thrust his hand into his pocket, in order to draw therefrom the familiar letter of recommendation, with the signature of Prince Khovansky, as we used to express ourselves in Russia at that period,* Tchitchikoff would stay his hand, saying with a smile, "No, no, you think that I—no, no! this is our duty; we are under obligations to do it; we must do it without any remuneration. You may rest easy on that point: everything will be completed to-morrow. Allow me to enquire where you are lodging? It is not necessary that you should put yourself to any personal trouble: everything will be brought to you at your own house."

The delighted applicant returned home almost in a state of ecstasy, thinking, "Here, at last, is a man of a kind which we ought to have more of: he is simply a precious diamond!"

But the petitioner waits one day, two days—and the matter is not brought to his house; the third day it is the same. He betakes himself to the office: the affair has not even been touched. Then he applies to the precious diamond: "Ah, excuse me!" says Tchitchikoff very courteously, seizing him by both hands. "We are so worried with business! but to-morrow everything will be finished—to-morrow, without fail. Really, I am mortified." And all this accompanied by the most fascinating manners.

But neither on the morrow, nor on the day after, nor on the day after that, are the papers brought to the petitioner at his house. The petitioner falls to thinking, "Doesn't this signify something?" He makes inquiries: he is told "The copyists must be given something."—"Why not? I am willing to give them twenty-five copecks!" he exclaims. "Why do you get so heated over it?" comes the reply. "This is the way it must be arranged: give a white-note to the copyist; he himself will get a quarter of a rouble out of it, and the rest will go to the head of the department."

The slow-witted petitioner deals himself a blow on the forehead, and curses the way in which the world is arranged nowadays, as well as the new customs, and the loftily courteous manners of the officials. "In former times, you used at least to know what you were about," he reflects. "If you presented the head of the department with a red bank-note,† your business was as good as done, but now you have to spend a white-note,‡ and waste a week into the bargain, before you can guess what they are up to. May the Devil fly away with their disinterestedness and official generosity!"

The petitioner was in the right, of course; but, on the other

* For about half a century, Prince Khovansky signed all the imperial bank-notes.

† Ten roubles.

‡ Twenty-five roubles.

hand, there were no longer any direct bribe-takers among the heads of departments, they were the most honest and the noblest of men: only the secretaries and the petty clerks were rascals. A much more extensive field soon presented itself to Tchitchikoff. A commission was appointed for the erection of some extremely important government building. He got himself appointed on this commission, and appeared to be one of the most active of its members. The commission set to work at once. The process of erection dragged on for six years; but the climate in some way interfered, or the building materials were not what they should have been; at all events, that government edifice never got any further than the foundations. But in the meantime, at the other extremity of the town, a handsome house, in the urban style of architecture, rose up for each member of the commission: obviously the soil was more propitious there. The members began to gather courage, too, and commenced to marry.

It was only then that Tchitchikoff gradually began to relax in his strict rules of conduct and his pitiless self-sacrifice. It was only then that his long-continued fast was lightened; and it appeared that he had never been averse to the various forms of enjoyment, from which he had known how to refrain during the fiery years of his youth, when no other man is able to control himself entirely. Some luxuries made their appearance at his place; he indulged in a tolerably good cook, and in fine cambric shirts. He had already begun to purchase some cloth for his own use, such as no one else in the whole province wore; and from that time forth he began to wear it—it was light brown or reddish in shade, and his coats were very much cut away in front. Then he had already set up an excellent pair of horses, and drove the team himself; he had also already contracted a habit of rubbing himself down with a sponge dipped in water mixed with *eau-de-Cologne*. he had already purchased some expensive soap for the purpose of imparting smoothness to his skin; he had already——

But all at once there was despatched, in the place of the easy-going chief, a new head of the department, who was a military man, a fierce general, a sworn foe of bribery, and of everything which is reckoned unjust. He frightened all the under-officials, down to the very last one; on the second day he demanded their accounts, detected various deficits, found money missing at every step; then he took note of his subordinates' handsome houses of urban architecture, and instituted an investigation. The officials were dismissed from the service; the houses of an urban style of architecture were turned over to the treasury, and converted into various benevolent institutions and district schools; everybody was blown into atoms, and Tchitchikoff worse than all the rest.

All of a sudden, his face, in spite of its agreeable expression, ceased to please the chief, just why God only knows—sometimes there is no cause whatever for such a thing. At all events, the

chief conceived a deadly hatred for Tchitchikoff and sacked him. But as this chief was a military man, it stood to reason that he did not understand all the refinements in the methods of transacting official affairs; indeed, after a brief interval, the new men he selected insinuated themselves into his good graces by feigning an upright appearance, and skillfully adapting themselves to circumstances; and the honest chief speedily found himself in the hands of greater rascals than ever, although he had not taken them for such; he even congratulated himself on having finally selected suitable men, and seriously flattered himself that he possessed high competence in the matter of discerning character. The officials understood his mind and disposition at once. Everything beneath his rule was carried on with a great show of honesty; and with such success that, within a short space of time, each one of his subordinates possessed a capital amounting to several thousand roubles.

At this juncture many of the ex-officials were converted to the path of righteousness, and were re-admitted to the service. But Tchitchikoff could not manage to make his way back on any terms; even the chief secretary, who had been induced to espouse his cause in consideration of some of Prince Khovansky's notes, and who led the general by the nose in all matters of business, could effect absolutely nothing in the present case. The chief belonged to that class of men who are led by the nose (without their knowledge, of course), but, if once an idea makes its way into their head, there it remains fast, exactly as though it were an iron nail: it is impossible to extract it in any manner whatever. All that the clever secretary could effect was the erasure of the beclouded record in the service register; and this he only managed by an appeal to the chief's compassion by depicting to him, in vivid colours, the miserable fate of Tchitchikoff's unhappy family, which family, fortunately, our hero did not possess.

"Well, this is a pretty situation!" said Tchitchikoff. "My hook caught, it dragged me up, but it has broken loose—and that settles it. Crying won't assuage my grief: I must set to work again." So he resolved to begin his career afresh, to indulge in patience again, to deny himself everything, without regard to the fine and luxurious style in which he had lately spent his money.

It was necessary to remove to another town, and to acquire fame there. But for some reason he was not successful in his new ventures. He was obliged to make two or three changes in his employment in a very brief space of time; the positions given him were dirty, and humiliating in a way. It must be stated that Tchitchikoff was the most decorous man that ever existed in this world. Although he was forced, at first, to make his way in vile company, he always preserved his cleanliness of mind: he liked to have an office table of varnished wood, in fact, to have everything handsome about him. He never

allowed himself to employ ungentlemanly language, and he always took offence if he detected in the words of others any absence of the respect due to rank and office. I think that the reader will be gratified to learn that he changed his linen every two days in the winter, and every day in summer, when the weather was warm; any smell which was in the least degree unpleasant offended him. For this reason, he always thrust a clove up his nose when Petrushka came to undress him and pull off his boots; and in many ways his nerves were as sensitive as those of a young girl. Hence, it was very hard for him to find himself again among the petty officials who were distinguished by an odour of spirits, and by real indelicacy of habits.

But brace his courage as he would, he all the same grew thin and even green, during this period of adversity. Previously he had already begun to grow plump, and to acquire those rounded, respectable outlines which, as the reader has seen, he possessed when we became acquainted with him; and many a time he had gazed in the glass, and meditated on much that was agreeable—such as a pretty little wife and children—and a smile had followed his thoughts; but now, when he glanced, accidentally as it were, at himself in the mirror, he could not refrain from exclaiming, "Holy Mother of God, how hideous I have grown!" And for a long time thereafter he did not care to look at himself.

However, our hero endured all, he endured it, endured it bravely and patiently, and—at length he passed into the custom-house service. It must be stated that this branch of the service had long formed the secret goal of his desires. He had observed what dainty foreign articles the custom-house officials possessed at home, what porcelain and muslin they presented to their lady cronies, their sisters, and their aunts. Long previously he had many a time said, with a sigh, "That's the place to be in: the frontier is close at hand, the people are cultivated, and what fine cambric shirts one could indulge in!"

It must be added, that in this connection he also thought of a certain special sort of French soap, which imparted a remarkable whiteness to the skin and freshness to the cheeks. What its name was, God only knew: but he assumed that it must infallibly be found abroad. Thus, he had long pined to enter the custom-house service, but he had been withheld from doing so for a long time by the profits which flowed to him from the building commission; and he had judged wisely, that the custom-house service, however desirable it might be, was nothing more than a crane afar in the heavens, while the building commission was certainly a titmouse in the hand.

Now, however, he was resolved to make his way into the custom-house service at any cost, and he accomplished it. He entered upon his duties with extraordinary zeal. It seemed as though fate itself had destined him to be a custom-house official. Such skill, penetration, and acumen had never been seen, or even

heard of before. In three or four weeks he had attained to such dexterity in custom-house matters, that he positively knew all that there was to be known: he no longer weighed or measured, but he could judge from the wrapper how many arshins there were in any piece of cloth, or any other material. On taking a package in his hand, he could instantly tell how many pounds it weighed. In searching for hidden goods, his own comrades declared that he possessed a regular dog's scent; indeed, it was impossible not to experience some surprise at witnessing how patient he was in feeling every button; and this he did with deadly equanimity and incredible courtesy.

When the people whom he was searching lost their tempers, flew into a rage, and experienced a malicious desire to spoil his agreeable face with their fists, he merely remarked, without any change in the expression of his countenance, or the suavity of his manners, "Will you not be so good as to stand up?" or, "Will you not be so kind, madam, as to step into the other room? the wife of one of our officials will come to an explanation with you there"; or, "Permit me to open the lining of your cloak a trifle with my penknife"; and so saying he would draw forth a shawl or a kerchief, with as much nonchalance as though it had been from his own trunk. His superiors admitted that he was the Devil himself, and not a man: he discovered goods in wheels, in shafts, in a horse's ears, and in nobody knows what other places besides, where it would never enter the author's head to hide them, and where no one but a custom-house official could find them. Thus the poor traveller who crossed the frontier lost his wits for several minutes, and could only cross himself, and say, as he wiped away the perspiration which had broken out all over his body, "Well, well!" The traveller's position very much resembled that of the scholar who has just emerged from the private apartment where his master has summoned him to receive an exhortation, but where he has quite unexpectedly treated him to a flogging.

In a very short time the smugglers found that there was no tricking our hero. Woe and despair reigned throughout all Polish Jewry. His honesty and incorruptibility were invincible, almost superhuman. He did not even collect a little capital for himself out of the various confiscated wares, and other articles which were seized in divers manners, and which did not reach the treasury, because they would necessitate superfluous correspondence. Such zealously disinterested service could not fail to become the subject of general admiration, and at length it came to the knowledge of the chiefs. Our hero received a promotion of one rank (*tchin*); and then he presented a scheme for trapping all the smugglers, merely requesting that he might be furnished with the means of conducting the affair himself. He was immediately intrusted with the command, and with unlimited power to conduct any and all sorts of searches. That was all he wanted.

At that time a large band of smugglers had been organised on a regular and well-conceived plan. The profits of this bold enterprise were reckoned by the million. Our friend had long known of its existence, and had even refused to wink at its doings, when an envoy had been despatched to buy him, saying dryly, "The proper time has not yet arrived." But at the very moment when he had got the entire disposition of affairs into his own hands, he informed the band that the time *had* arrived. His calculations were well founded. In one year he might obtain more money than he could earn in twenty. He had not cared to enter into relations with these people before, because then he had only been an insignificant individual, and, consequently, he would have received but little; but now, now it was quite another matter, he could make what terms he pleased. In order that the business might progress without loss or hindrance, he confided in another official, a comrade of his, who was unable to resist the seduction despite the fact that his hair was white. The terms were agreed upon, and the company began operations.

Business opened in a brilliant manner. The reader has doubtless heard the ancient and oft-repeated anecdote about the clever journeys of the Spanish sheep, who used to cross the frontier-line of Russia in a double fleece, carrying a million's worth of Brabant lace beneath their outer fleece. This occurred at the very time that Tchitchikoff was in the customs' service. Had he not participated in the smuggling undertaking, no Jew in existence could have carried such a thing to a successful termination. After three or four journeys of the sheep across the frontier, Tchitchikoff and his brother official each found themselves in possession of a capital of four hundred thousand roubles. It was even said that Tchitchikoff, being the more daring, secured over five hundred thousand.

God alone knows to what vast amount these delightful sums would have increased, had not the cursed fiend ruined the whole business. The Evil One threw the two officials into a tiff; the functionaries, to speak plainly, quarrelled about the veriest trifle. It came about in the heat of conversation, and possibly they may have been drinking a little. Tchitchikoff called the other official a "pope's son"; and the latter, although he was in reality the son of a priest, took violent offence—no one knew why—and instantly retorted in a vigorous and remarkably cutting manner, as follows, "No, you lie! I am the son of a councillor of state, not a pope's son; and as for you—why you are a pope's son yourself!" And in his pique, he added for the further exasperation of his adversary, "Yes, that's it precisely!"

Although he had thoroughly quenched Tchitchikoff by thus bestowing upon him the epithet which had been applied to himself, and although the expression, "That's precisely it!" was a

trifle strong, yet, not satisfied with all this, he sent a private denunciation of our friend to the authorities. Moreover, it was said that there had also been a quarrel between them over a pretty little woman, who, according to the expression of the custom-house functionaries, was as stout and as rosy as a fresh beet; and it was added that men had been hired by our hero's rival to give him a sound drubbing at night in a dark alley. However, both officials were being deceived, as the pretty little woman really favoured a certain Staff-Captain Shamshareff. God only knows how the matter actually stood: let the reader who likes doing so invent a case to suit himself. The chief point is, that the secret relations with the smugglers were made public. Although the councillor of state's son ruined himself, he succeeded in thoroughly revenging himself on his comrade. Tchitchikoff was brought before the court, everything which he possessed was confiscated and catalogued, and the whole affair burst over his head with the suddenness of a clap of thunder. Both the confederates recovered themselves as from a stupor, and then they realised what they had done. The councillor of state's son would not stand trial, but perished in some obscure retreat; while our hero, already a collegiate councillor, stood his trial. He had managed to conceal a portion of his money, fine as was the scent of the investigating committee appointed by his chiefs. In defending himself, too, he employed all the most subtle subterfuges of a mind which was already well experienced and versed in the ways of men; in one case he employed fascinations of manner; in another affecting speeches; in yet another he threw dust in his superior's eyes by means of flattery, which never harms any case whatever; and in a fourth instance he slipped a little money into the proper hand. In short, he adjusted the matter in such a fashion that he was not left in the dishonoured position of his companion, but escaped punishment. However, there no longer remained to him either his five hundred thousand roubles or his various foreign trifles, or anything else; other amateurs had laid hands on all of them. Still he retained a little hoard of ten thousand roubles, which he had concealed in provision for a dark day; together with a couple of dozen cambric shirts, a little britchka, such as is used by bachelors, and two serfs —the coachman Selifan and the valet Petrushka; moreover, the custom-house officials, moved by compassion, left him five or six pieces of soap for the preservation of his rosy complexion— and that was all. So behold the situation in which our hero again found himself! Behold what a mass of misfortune had descended upon his head! This was what he designated as "suffering for the right in the service."

It might now be surmised that after such storms, experiences, after such fickleness of fate, and human woe, he would depart to some distant and tranquil solitude, to some little provincial town, with his ten thousand roubles which had cost him so dear,

and wither away in a chintz dressing-gown, at the window of a tiny house; or else, by way of recreation, stroll out into the chicken-yard, and feel each pullet which was destined for the table—indeed, in this manner, lead a noiseless but in its own way, not entirely useless life.

However, this was not the way that things turned out. Justice must be rendered to our hero's invincible strength of character. After all this, which would have sufficed, if not to annihilate, at least to cool and calm another man for ever, his unconquerable passion was not at all dulled within him. He was grieved, he was vexed, he grumbled against all the world, he was indignant at the injustice of fate, he was enraged by the injustice of men; and yet he could not refrain from fresh attempts. In a word, he displayed a patience in comparison with which that of a plodding German is nothing, since the latter is solely due to the slow, languid circulation of his blood. Tchitchikoff's blood, on the contrary, flowed briskly; but the exercise of much thoughtful volition was required to enable him to cast out his hook at anything now likely to yield him profit.

He reflected, and his thoughts obviously took this point of view: "Why do I exist? Why has misfortune overwhelmed me? Who cares about one's duties nowadays? Everybody wins his way. I have not rendered anyone unhappy; I have not plundered the widow; I have not turned anyone adrift penniless on the world; I have merely availed myself of superfluous cash. I accepted it in cases where any one would have taken it; if I had not taken advantage of the chance, other people would have done so. Why do others thrive while I become food for the worm? And what am I now? What am I good for? With what eyes must I now gaze into those of any respectable father of a family? How can I avoid feeling the gnawing of conscience, knowing, as I do, that I am a useless burden on the earth? And what will my children say hereafter? 'There,' they will say, 'is our beast of a father: he will leave us no property at all!'"

It has already been seen that Tchitchikoff worried a great deal over his posterity. Such a tender subject it is! Perhaps even some other man would not have purloined so much if it had not been for the question which, for some unknown reason, springs up of itself, "What will the children say?" So behold the future founder of a race, like a cautious cat, which, with a sidelong glance, observes whether the master be not looking, and then hastily seizes everything which is within its reach, whether it be soap or candles or tallow, or a canary bird, which in short, lets nothing whatever escape it.

Thus, our hero wept and complained: but, in the meantime, he never ceased exercising his wits. Again he retired within himself; again he stinted himself in every way; again he undertook to lead a hard life; again he descended from a clean and respectable existence to dirt and the life of the lowly. And

while awaiting something better, he was fain to engage in the calling of a steward—a calling which has not hitherto been largely adopted by our citizen classes, for a steward receives buffets from all quarters, is but little respected by the petty-clerk tribe, or even by confidential agents, is condemned to dance attendance in ante-rooms, and to put up with impertinence and so on; however, necessity obliged our hero to make up his mind to everything.

Among the commissions which fell to him in this new capacity was the mortgaging of several hundred peasants to the Council of Guardians.* His employer's estate was ruined to the last degree. It had suffered from murrain among the cattle; from the depredations of rascally overseers; from bad harvests; from epidemic diseases; from the death of the best workmen; and, most of all, from the senseless behaviour of the owner, who had decorated a gorgeous house in Moscow in the latest taste, and had thus spent his very last copeck, so that he had nothing left to purchase food for himself. For this reason, he was finally compelled to mortgage his last remaining serfs. This pawning was a new thing in those days, and it was not decided upon without fear and trembling. Tchitchikoff, in his capacity of agent, after having first rendered all the officials favourable (it is well known that, without conciliating them not an application is ever entertained, not an inquiry answered), having thus acquired the favour of all of them, he explained to the secretary that one-half of the peasants having died, there might be a lot of trouble as regards the security.

"But they are still reckoned on the census-list?" said the secretary.

"Yes, they are so reckoned," replied Tchitchikoff.

"Well, what are you afraid of?" said the secretary: "one has died, another has been born, so the people remain available all the same."

The secretary evidently understood how to talk to the point. But in the meantime, the most inspired thought that ever entered a human brain had flashed upon that of our hero.

"Ah, I am a regular Akim the Simpleton!" he said to himself: "I have been hunting for my mittens, and they are both in my belt! Now, suppose that I buy all the souls which have died since the last census was taken; and suppose that I obtain a thousand of them, say, and that the Council of Guardians will lend, say, two hundred roubles a soul; there I shall have a capital of two hundred thousand roubles! And the times are

* The Council of Guardians is a grand banking establishment, directed by a council which governs various institutes for orphans and deaf-mutes, placed under the patronage of the reigning empress. Money can be property can be mortgaged there. Serfs to the number of ten thousand deposited there at an interest of four per cent., and both real and personal could be pawned there in former times, when one of this Council's most considerable sources of income was the monopoly of playing-cards, which in Russia, as elsewhere, insures a safe and lucrative revenue.

propitious just now: there was an epidemic not long ago, and not a few people died, glory be to God! The landed gentry have also been losing at cards, and carousing and squandering in proper fashion; everybody has crawled off to Petersburg, to enter the service; their estates are abandoned, or managed at hap-hazard; they find it harder every year to pay their taxes; so it may chance that I shall be able to earn a copeck once more. Of course, it is difficult and troublesome, and it would be the finishing touch if any scandal arose from this. But what is a man's mind given to him for! To contend with difficulties of course. And the best thing about it is, that the affair will appear incredible to everybody, and no one will believe it. It is true that without land it is impossible either to purchase or to pawn serfs. But I will buy them for colonisation—for colonisation! The land in the provinces of Tauris and Kherson is now given away gratuitously to anyone who will settle upon it. I will take them all there! To the Khersonese with them! There let them live! And the colonisation can be effected in legal form, according to the decrees of the courts. If the officials want to review the serfs, I won't object. I will present a certificate, with the signature of the captain-ispravnik himself. The village can be styled the 'Tchitchikoff Sloboda,'* or else called after my baptismal name, the 'Hamlet of Pavlovskoe.'"

So this is the way in which that strange project was formed in the brain of our hero; and I am not sure whether the reader will feel grateful or not to him for conceiving it; but it is difficult to express how grateful the author is to him, for say what you like, had this scheme never entered the head of our friend Tchitchikoff, this book would never have made its appearance on the earth.

Our hero crossed himself in Russian fashion, and set to work. Under pretence of selecting a place of residence, and other suitable pretexts, he undertook to obtain a peep at various corners of our empire, and especially at those which had suffered more than the others from mishaps—bad crops, mortality, and so forth: in short, all the spots where he could most comfortably and cheaply purchase the people whom he required. He did not address himself at random to any landowner, but selected the men who were most to his taste, or those with whom the transaction of such business would present the fewest difficulties, after first making their acquaintance, and disposing them in his favour, so that, as far as possible, he might acquire the dead serfs out of friendship, instead of by purchase.

This, then, is the complete portrait of our hero. But a final explanation of one characteristic may be required: What is he as regards moral qualities? That he is not a hero composed of perfection and virtue is obvious. Who is he? A knave, of course. Why a knave? Why be so stern towards another?

* A sloboda in ancient times was a village in the suburbs of a town, peopled by feudal retainers.

There are no knaves among us now: there are only well-intentioned people, agreeable people abroad; and they are all talking of virtue.

No doubt the public will be dissatisfied with our hero; but this is not so hard to bear as is the fact that there lives in the author's mind the invincible conviction that, under different circumstances, his readers might have been pleased with this same hero, with this very Tchitchikoff. If the author had not looked deeper than others into his hero's soul, if he had not beheld in its depths things which escape most people; if he had not revealed the secret thoughts for which no man gives another credit, but had depicted him in the light in which he appeared to the whole town, to Manilloff and other persons, then everyone would have been delighted, and would have considered him a very interesting man. Perhaps neither his face nor his personality, as a whole, would have struck the eye so forcibly; but, on the other hand, on finishing the perusal of this story, the reader's soul would not have been in the least moved, and he might have turned once more to the card-table, which is the universal comforter in Russia. Yes, my good readers, you would have preferred not to see the man's meanness laid bare. "Why," you say, "to what purpose is this? Do we not ourselves know that there is much which is stupid and despicable in life? And moreover it frequently happens that we behold things which are not at all cheerful. Show us rather something very beautiful, very attractive: it is better to forget ourselves." "Why, my friend, do you inform me that domestic matters are going so badly?" says the master to his steward. "I know all that without your telling me, my good fellow; haven't you anything else to talk about? I don't want to know about it: let me forget it, and then I shall be happy." And then the money which would have gone so far towards righting matters is employed in various ways in lulling the master to forgetfulness. The mind which might, perhaps, have invented a means of acquiring vast wealth, slumbers; and so at last the estates go bang! to the auction—and the master goes forth into the wide world to forget himself with a soul prepared in its dire need to accomplish vile deeds which would have terrified it before.

Why hide all this? Why hesitate over words? Why be chary of calling things by their right names? Who, if not an author, is to speak the truth? You are afraid of a deep, scrutinising glance; you shrink from fixing a deep gaze upon anything yourselves; you are fond of slipping past everything, with eyes which see nothing. You even laugh heartily at Tchitchikoff; perhaps you even praise the author; you say, "At any rate, he has sketched him cleverly. He must be a jolly sort of a man!" And after these words, you turn with redoubled arrogance to yourselves, a self-satisfied smile makes its appearance on your countenances, and you add, "Well it must be

admitted that people are dreadfully queer in some of our provinces and there must be a few rascals among them!" However, which of you, filled with Christian humility, will dive into the depths of his own soul, and not aloud, but in silence and solitude, in moments of isolated self-communion, will put to himself the weighty question, "And is there not some taint of Tchitchikoff in me also?" Why not, indeed? Still you never say that of yourself; but if some acquaintance of neither very lofty nor very low rank passes by, you instantly nudge your neighbour, and say to him, almost bursting with laughter the while, "Look, look! there is Tchitchikoff! Tchitchikoff has passed by!" and then, like a child, oblivious of all the respect which is due to rank and years, you will run after him, imitate him behind his back, and say, "Tchitchikoff! Tchitchikoff! Tchitchikoff!"

But we have been talking in rather a loud tone of voice, forgetful of the fact that our hero, who has slumbered while we have recounted his life, is awake now, and might easily overhear his name, thus often repeated. He is a man who takes offence readily, and who does not like to have people express themselves disrespectfully with regard to him. No doubt it matters little to the reader whether Tchitchikoff be incensed with him or not, but the author must on no account quarrel with his hero; there still remains a considerable space over which they must travel hand in hand.

The britchka, with Tchitchikoff, Selifan, and Petrushka was still proceeding at a jog-trot, when our hero woke up.

"Oho! What are you about?" he said to his coachman. "Answer, I'm speaking to you!"

"What?" asked Selifan in a leisurely tone.

"What, indeed! You goose! Where are you going? Come now, make haste!"

And in fact, Selifan had been driving along for a good while with his eyes half shut, just touching the horses—who also were dreaming—with the reins from time to time; and Petrushka's cap had long since fallen off in some unknown spot, while he himself had fallen backwards until his head struck against Tchitchikoff's knees, so that the latter was obliged to give him a push. But Selifan now roused himself up, and after administering a few lashes to the piebald, and flourishing his knout in the air, he ejaculated, in a sing-song tone, "Never fear!" The horses then started up, and drew the light britchka along as if it had been merely a tuft of down. Selifan still flourished away, and shouted, "Eh, eh, eh!" as he jerked up and down on the box, while the troïka flew, now up the ascents and then down the declivities of the highway.

Tchitchikoff smiled as he lightly swung on his leather cushions, for he liked to drive rapidly. And what Russian does not love fast driving? How could it fail to suit the taste of a man who is always striving for excitement, who delights to roam? How

could his soul help loving this? Should he not love it, this speed which seems so triumphant, so marvellous? It is as though an unknown power had taken you upon its wings; that you were flying on and on while everything else was flying back. The verst-stones fly back; the merchants, on the boxes of their britchkas, fly to meet you; the forest flies off on both sides of the road, with its dark bands of pines and firs, and with the blows of axes and the cawing of crows resounding in its depths; the whole road flits away into the dim distance. And there is something terrible bound up with this swift flashing, amid which one can only distinguish the sky overhead, flecked with light clouds; and where the moon, as it pierces them, seems to be the only thing which is immovable.

Ah, the troïka—the bird-troïka! Who invented thee? Of course, thou couldst only have had thy birth among a dashing race—in that land which has extended smoothly, glidingly, over half the earth, and where one may count the verst-pillars until one's eyes swim. Thou art not a complicated vehicle, friend troïka. Thou art not put together with iron spikes; a clever moujik of Yaroslavl, with axe and chisel only, has made thee with despatch. Thy driver wears no German cavalry-boots: he has a beard and mittens, they are all he needs. The deuce only knows what he sits upon; but see, he has risen, and he waves his arms and strikes up a song. The horses dash on like a whirlwind; the spokes of the wheels have become merged into one smooth circle; the road quakes, and the foot-traveller halts and cries aloud in alarm—while yet the troïka flies on, on, on! And, behold, it is already visible afar, raising a cloud of dust, and piercing the air, till at last it vanishes from view.

Is it not thus, like the bold troïka which cannot be overtaken, that thou art dashing along, O Russia, my country? The roads smoke beneath thee, the bridges thunder; all is left, all will be left, behind thee. The spectator stops short astounded, as at a marvel of God. Is this the lightning which has descended from heaven? he asks. What does this awe-inspiring movement betoken? and what uncanny power is possessed by these horses, so strange to the world? Ah! horses, horses, Russian horses! what horses you are! Doth the whirlwind sit upon your manes? Doth your sensitive ear prick with every tingle in your veins? But lo! you have heard a familiar song from on high; simultaneously, in friendly wise you have bent your brazen breasts to the task; and, hardly letting your hoofs touch the earth, you advance in one tightly-stretched line, flying through the air. Yes, on the troïka flies, inspired by God! O Russia, whither art thou dashing? Reply! But she replies not; the horses' bells break into a wondrous sound; the shattered air becomes a tempest, and the thunder growls; Russia flies past everything else upon earth; and other peoples, kingdoms, and empires gaze askance as they stand aside to make way for her!

CHAPTER TWELVE

TENTYOTNIKOFF; OR, THE SORROWS OF LOVE

WHY, it may be asked, why depict misery upon misery, and the imperfection of our lives, by unearthing people from the wilderness, from the remote nooks and corners of our empire? But what is to be done if the character of the author is such that, conscious of his own imperfection, he is unable to depict anything except misery upon misery, and the imperfections of our life, unearthing people from the wilderness, from remote nooks and corners of the empire? And here we have again arrived in the wilds, again we have hit upon a distant nook. But, on the whole, what a nook, what wilds!

Like the gigantic escarpment of some interminable fortress, with angles and batteries, the mountainous elevation extends for more than a thousand versts. Grandly does it pursue its course across the boundless expanse of the plain, now breaking off in the shape of a perpendicular wall, of a clayey or limestone formation, hollowed out into gullies and watercourses, and rounding over in a swelling which pleases the eye, covered, as with a lambskin coat, with young bushes, which have sprouted forth amid the trees which had been felled; and, last of all, with dark clumps of forest, which have escaped the axe by some miracle. The river, now faithful to its bed, displays sharp angles and round curves, and now stretches to a distance into the meadows, where, after several windings, it glitters like fire beneath the sun. Then it hides itself in a grove of beeches, ash-trees, and alders, and thence emerges in triumph in company with bridges, mills, and dams, which seem to pursue it at every step.

Here had met examples of the whole vegetable kingdom. The oak, the fir, the wild-pear, the maple, the cherry, the thorn or nettle-tree, with wild wreathing ivy and hops, climbed all over the mountain side from summit to base, now aiding now stifling each other in their growth. And aloft, mingled with their verdant crests, appeared the red roofs of a manorial building, the peaks and frets of the peasants' cabins being concealed in the rear, behind the carved balcony and large half-rounded windows of the mansion. And over all these roofs and trees the ancient church reared its five glittering golden crests. On all its cupolas

there were open-work gilt crosses, and, at a distance, it seemed as though the gold, sparkling like burning ducats, hung suspended in the air without support. And all this—roofs, tree-tops, and crosses—was charmingly reflected, but in a reversed position, in the river, where the hollow, deformed willows, standing, some in the water and others on the margin, with their branches and their leaves drooping thence, all enveloped in the green slime which floated on the stream with the yellow water-lilies, appeared to be gazing upon their wondrous reflection.

Who was the owner of this picturesque village, approached from a long avenue of oaks, which received the visitor courteously, stretching out their drooping boughs as though for a friendly embrace, and accompanying him to the very front of the house, of which we have already seen the upper storey from afar, and which now stands face to face with one, having on one side a row of peasants' cabins displaying peaks and carved gables, and on the other hand a church glittering with golden crosses? To what fortunate individual did this labyrinth belong?

To a landowner of the Tremalakhansky district, Andrei Ivanovitch Tentyotnikoff by name, a lucky young fellow of thirty, who was still unmarried.

Who was he? what was he? what qualities, what capacities, did he possess? We must inquire of his neighbours—of his neighbours, dear readers. One neighbour expressed his opinion of him by the laconic phrase, "A perfect beast!" A general, who lived at a distance of ten versts off, said, "He is by no means a stupid young man, but he has got a great many queer notions into his head. I might be of service to him, for I am not without influence in St. Petersburg, and even with——" However, the general did not finish his speech. As for the captain-ispravnik, he gave this answer: "There's something low about him—he's a worthless fellow; and I must go after him to-morrow for his arrears!" The moujiks of the village, when questioned as to what sort of a man their master was, made no reply at all. So, of course, their opinion of him was unfavourable.

But, to speak dispassionately, he was not a bad fellow: he simply encumbered the earth. Since there are a great many people in the wide world who are utterly useless, why should not Tentyotnikoff be one of them too?

As a rule he awoke very late in the morning; and on rising, he sat for a long time in his bed, rubbing his eyes. And, although his eyes were unfortunately small, this operation lasted a remarkably long time. In the meanwhile his man, Mikhailo, stood at the door, with a hand-basin and a towel. This poor Mikhailo stood an hour there, then another hour; then he went to the kitchen and came back again, but his master was still rubbing his eyes and sitting up in bed. Finally he rose from his bed, washed himself, put on his dressing-gown, and came out into

the drawing-room to drink some tea, coffee, cocoa, and even some boiled milk, sipping a little of all of them, mercilessly crumbling his bread, and heedlessly scattering the ashes from his pipe all over the place. He sat for two hours over his tea, and that was not all: he took a cold cupful of it, and walked to the window which overlooked the court-yard; and at the window the following scene took place every day:—

First of all, Grigoriv, a house-serf, who acted as butler, roared at Perfilievna, the housekeeper, in some such terms as these: "You clumsy, big, rebellious darling! you worthless hussy! You might, at least, hold your noise, you disgusting woman!"

"And don't you want that?" shrieked the worthless woman, making an insulting sign with her hand. Perfilievna was a coarse woman in her actions, despite of the fact that she was fond of raisins, fruit-tarts, and all sorts of sweets, which she kept under lock and key.

"You have entered into a compact with the steward, you storehouse good-for-nothing!" shouted Grigoriv.

"Yes, and the steward is just such another thief as you are. Do you think that the master doesn't know you? Why, he's there, he is listening."

"Where's the master?"

"There he is, sitting by the window; he sees everything."

And the master really was sitting at the window, and he saw everything.

To complete the uproar, a child belonging to a house-serf which had received a hearty slap from its mother, screamed at the top of its voice; then a greyhound howled on account of the hot water with which the cook had splashed it as she chased it from the kitchen. In short, everything was screaming and wailing intolerably. The master saw and heard it all. And it was only when it became so unendurable that it prevented his doing anything whatever that he sent out word to say that they must make less noise.

Two hours before dinner he retired to his study to engage in a serious literary composition, which was designed to embrace all Russia, from all points of view—the political, social, religious, and philosophical—he meant to solve all the difficult questions attaching to her history, and to clearly define her great future; everything in short was to be done in that form and fashion in which the man of the day delights. This colossal undertaking was limited, however, to thought: our writer nibbles his pen, sundry drawings made their appearance upon his paper, and then everything was thrown aside and a book was taken in hand, and not dropped again until dinner-time. This book was perused with the soup, the roast, the salad, and even with the pastry, so that some dishes grew cold and some were even removed untasted. After this came a pipe and some coffee, and a game of chess with himself. What he did afterwards until

supper-time it would be hard to say. It appeared that he simply did nothing whatever.

And thus did one utterly solitary young man of thirty pass his time, constantly sitting about in his dressing-gown, without any neckcloth. He did not walk out, he did not even care to go upstairs to look at the view; he did not care to open the windows to admit fresh air into the room; and it was as though the sight of the beautiful village, which no visitor could help admiring, did not exist for its owner. From this the reader will see that Andrei Ivanovitch Tentyotnikoff belonged to that class of people who are not extinct in Russia, and who were formerly called sluggards and lazybones, and who are now called I know not what. Are such characteristics born with a man, or are they developed later in life, begotten by the gloomy circumstances with which the man is hemmed in? In reply to this question it will be better to relate the history of this young fellow's childhood and training.

It seemed as though everything had conspired to make something odd out of him. As a sharp-witted lad of twelve, of a thoughtful mood and somewhat sickly constitution, he entered a school managed at that time by a very remarkable man. The idol of youth, the wonderful teacher, the incomparable Alexander Petrovitch, was endowed with the gift of divining a man's nature. How he did understand the character of the Russian man! How he understood children! How well he knew how to move them! There was not a mischief-maker who did not come to him, after playing a prank, and confess it of his own accord. But this was not all; the player of pranks did not leave the master's presence with drooping head, but held it well in the air, with a hearty desire to atone for his fault. There was something encouraging in Alexander Petrovitch's very reproof, something which said, "Forward! Rise as quickly as possible to your feet, without heeding your fall!" He called ambition the force which stimulates a man onward, and he endeavoured to arouse it. With him there was no question of good behaviour. He generally said, "I require brains and nothing else. He who directs his attention to acquiring knowledge will have no time for pranks, mischief will disappear of itself."

This schoolmaster did not have many pupils, and he mostly taught in person. He understood how to give the very marrow of the subject, without pedantic accessories or pompous views or speculations, and so that it seemed plain to the youngest that the knowledge was necessary to them. Only those branches of learning were chosen by him which were adapted to make a man a good citizen. The greater part of the lessons consisted in stories about what awaited a young man in the future, and he understood so well how to sketch out a career, that the youth lived mind and soul in the service while still on his school form. The master, hiding nothing, set before the boy in all their

nakedness the bitterness and the hindrances which arise in a man's path, and all the trials and temptations which await him. He knew everything, just as though he himself had passed through every rank and calling.

Whether it was from this cause that ambition was so strongly aroused in his pupils, or because there was something in the very eyes of this extraordinary teacher, which said to the youth, "Forward!"—that word so well known to the Russian, and which works wonders on his sensitive organisation—at all events, the youths from the very outset sought out difficulties and longed to be in action, contending with the greatest hardships under circumstances in which it was necessary to display the utmost firmness of soul. Few graduated after this course of study, but those few proved men of might. They remained firm in the most insecure places; while many who were much more clever than they were, could not endure their position, but abandoned everything on account of petty personal vexations; or else having become dull and lazy, they found themselves in the hands of bribe-takers and rogues. But the others wavered not; and knowing both life and men, and possessing true wisdom, they exercised a powerful influence on the evil-disposed.

How this wonderful teacher startled Andrei Ivanovitch in his boyhood! The fiery heart of the ambitious lad for a long time leaped at the very thought of entering upon the higher course of study; and indeed, when sixteen years old, Tentyotnikoff, having distanced all the lads of his own age, was counted worthy of being transferred to the highest class as one of the best, though he did not believe it himself. What to all appearances could be better for our Tentyotnikoff than such an instructor? But fate would have it so, that at the very time when the lad was transferred to this class of the elect—a thing which he had so ardently desired—the remarkable teacher, whose words of encouragement alone threw him into a sweet confusion, fell ill, and died shortly afterwards. Oh, what a blow was this for the young fellow! How terrible was this his first loss. It seemed to him as though everything in the academy were altered.

In the place of Alexander Petrovitch there then came a certain Feodor Ivanovitch, a good painstaking man, but one who held very different views of things. In the easy unconstraint of the boys of the first class he thought that he detected intractability. He began by instituting among them certain outward forms of order; for instance he required the young fellows to preserve unbroken silence, under no circumstances were they to walk out except in pairs; and he even began to measure the distance from couple to couple with his *arshin*-stick. At table he arranged them according to size for appearance's sake, and not according to capacity; so that the stupid boys got the best bits and the clever boys the remnants. All this provoked grumbling, especially when the new master, in direct opposition to the practices of his

predecessor, announced that brains and fine progress signified nothing to him; that he only looked at conduct; that if a boy studied badly but behaved well, he should show him a preference over the clever but playful boy. However, Feodor Ivanovitch did not attain his object. Playfulness being objected to, secret pranks began. Everything went like clockwork in the daytime, but at night there was rioting.

Our young friend Andrei Ivanovitch was of a quiet disposition. He could not be led astray by the nightly orgies of his schoolmates, who played their pranks in full view of the windows of the principal's quarters, nor by their mockery of holy things, which arose because the pope did not chance to be a clever man. No, even in his dreams his mind recognised its heavenly origin. Still he hung his head: his ambition was aroused, but there was no career of active occupation open to him. It would have been better perhaps had this ambition not been aroused at all. He listened to the enthusiastic professors at their lectures, and recalled his former instructor, who had known how to talk in intelligible terms without becoming excited. What courses did he not attend! What subjects did he not hear treated! Medicine and chemistry, philosophy, law, and the universal history of mankind, all on such a vast scale, that in three years the professors merely succeeded in reading the introduction. However, all this lingered in Andrei's brain in formless masses. Thanks to his native common-sense, he was conscious that he ought not to be taught in that manner; but the proper way he did not know. And he often recalled Alexander Petrovitch, and grew so sad at times that he did not know what to do with himself for grief.

But youth is happy in this, that it has a future. In proportion as the time of his departure from school drew nigh, his heart began to beat more violently. He said to himself, "Surely, this is not life; this is only the preparation for life: real life lies on the surface; that is the place for action." And without even glancing at the marvellously beautiful little nook which made such an impression on every visitor, without even paying obeisance to the dust of his parents, he betook himself, after the custom of all ambitious men, to Petersburg, where, as it is well known, all our spirited young fellows hasten, from every quarter of Russia, to enter the service, to shine or to work, or simply to skim the surface of colourless, deceptive society, which is as cold as ice.

Andrei Ivanovitch's ambitious aspirations were promptly quelled, however, at the very outset by his uncle, Onufriy Ivanovitch, an actual councillor of state. The latter declared that the chief point in a man was a good handwriting; that, without this, no one could obtain admission to a ministry or to any imperial office. At last, however, with great difficulty, and with the assistance of his uncle's influence, Tentyotnikoff secured an appointment in some department or other. When he was

conducted for the first time into the light and magnificent hall, with its inlaid floor and varnished writing-desks, which looked as though the greatest grandees of the empire sat at them, and dealt with the fate of the whole country; when he beheld the legions of handsome gentlemen who were writing there, noisily moving their pens, and inclining their heads on one side; and when they placed him at a table, and at once gave him a document —intentionally of little importance—to copy (it was a correspondence about three roubles, which had been going on for half a year), an extraordinarily odd sensation took possession of him.

It seemed to him as though he were in some primary school, and had to go through his education all over again. It was as though he had been degraded from the upper to the lower class for some prank or other; the gentlemen who were seated around him were very much like scholars. His former occupations then seemed better to him than those of the present moment, and his preparation for the service superior to the service itself. He began to regret his school-life. And all at once the defunct Alexander Petrovitch stood so vividly before him that he came near bursting into tears. The room spun round, the officials and the tables became all mixed up together, and he with difficulty conquered this momentary obscuration of his faculties. "No," he said on recovering himself, "I will set to work, no matter how petty the work may seem in the beginning!" Then summoning strength to his heart and spirit, he resolved to acquit himself of his duties in imitation of the rest.

After a short time Tentyotnikoff became used to the service, only it did not prove to be his chief aim and object, as he had at first supposed that it would be, but something of secondary importance. It served as a means of occupying his time, causing him to set a higher value on the moments which remained to him. His uncle, the actual councillor of state, had begun to think that his nephew was going to do him credit, when all of a sudden this nephew disappointed him.

Among Andrei Ivanovitch's friends—and these were numerous —there chanced to be two who were what is called "embittered men." They possessed those uneasy and peculiar characters which not only manifest displeasure at real injustice, but even at whatever seems in their eyes to be unjust. Good men at the outset but disorderly in their own conduct, demanding consideration for themselves, and at the same time most intolerant towards others, they acted powerfully on Andrei Ivanovitch by means of their fiery language and the manner in which they evinced their noble indignation against society. After making him irritable, they called his attention to all sorts of trifles to which he would not before have thought of paying any heed. Then Feodor Feodorovitch Lyenitzuin, the chief of one of the departments, suddenly incurred the young fellow's displeasure. Andrei began to seek out a multitude of shortcomings in the chief.

It seemed to him that in conversation with his superiors he turned entirely into artificial sugar, and that when he addressed himself to a subordinate, into vinegar; that, after the manner of all petty-minded individuals, he took note of those who presented themselves with congratulations for him on festive occasions, and revenged himself on those whose names did not appear on his porter's list.

In consequence of this, Andrei Ivanovitch felt a positive disgust with him, and at last one day he addressed Feodor Feodorovitch with so much impertinence that he received an intimation from the authorities that he must either apologise or send in his resignation. He then sent in his resignation. His uncle, the actual councillor of state, came to him in alarm, with entreaties: "For Christ's sake, Andrei Ivanovitch, consider! What are you doing? Abandoning a career so auspiciously begun simply because you happened not to like the chief? Reflect! Who are you? What is this to you? Why, if such things were to be noticed, no one would remain in the service. Reconsider the matter, mortify your pride, go and explain matters to him!"

"That is not the point, uncle," said the nephew. "It isn't hard for me to ask his pardon. I am in the wrong: he is the chief, and it wasn't proper for me to speak to him in that manner. But the question is this: I have another duty—three hundred souls of peasants, an estate in disorder, and a fool as a steward. The empire will suffer very little loss if another man is set to copying documents in the office in my stead, but there will be a vast loss if three hundred men do not pay their taxes. What do you think about it? I am a landowner; if I busy myself with improving and caring for those who are intrusted to me, and if I present the empire with three hundred upright, sober, and industrious subjects, will my service be in any way inferior to that of any head of department—Lyenitzuin, for instance?"

The actual councillor of state stood with his mouth wide open in amazement. He had not expected such a reply. After reflecting for a short time, he began again in this fashion: "But still, my friend, how can you bury yourself in the country? What sort of society can there be among the moujiks? Here, at all events, you may encounter a general or a prince in the street. You will pass someone there; well, and there's the gaslights, and busy Europe hard by, whereas, in the country, everyone you meet is either a peasant or a woman. And why condemn yourself to barbarity for your whole life?"

However, the convincing arguments of the uncle had no effect upon the nephew. The latter felt weary of the service and of the capital. The country had begun to present itself to him in the light of a comfortable retreat, calculated to refresh his mind, and he might there lead a life of useful activity. He had already unearthed the newest books on the subject of village economy.

Within two weeks after this conversation, Tentyotnikoff was

in the neighbourhood of the scenes amid which his childhood had been passed, not far from the very beautiful nook which no visitor or tourist was ever able to admire sufficiently. He had already quite forgotten certain spots, and he gazed with curiosity upon the magnificent views, like a perfect new-comer. And, lo! for some unknown reason, his heart began to beat on a sudden. When, in answer to the query, "Whose forest is this?" he was told, "Tentyotnikoff's"; when, emerging from the forest, the road ran through meadows, past groves of quivering aspens, old willows, and young vines, in sight of the heights which stretched afar; when it flew over the bridges, leaving the river now on the right, and now on the left; and when, in answer to the query, "Whose are these fields and water-meadows?" the answer came, "Tentyotnikoff's"; when the road again ascended the heights, and ran on the one hand along a level plateau, past crops of wheat, rye, and barley, and on the other past all the places through which he had previously journeyed, and which presented themselves, all of a sudden, foreshortened by the distance; and when, as the darkness gradually descended, the road again stretched beneath the shadow of luxuriant trees, scattered over the greensward up to the very entrance of the village, and the peasants' cabins made their appearance here and there, together with the red-roofed manor-house and its dependent buildings, and the gleaming golden cupolas of the church; when, by his hotly beating heart and without putting any question, he became conscious what the place was where he had arrived—then it was that the sensations and thoughts which had been incessantly accumulating within him burst into expression in the following words:—

"Well and have not I been a fool hitherto? Fate destined me to be the owner of an earthly paradise, and I bound myself into servitude as a scribbler of dead documents! The idea of intrusting this place of mine to a steward—of preferring the conduct of affairs at a distance among strangers—of preferring to the actual management of my own property, the fantastic paper management of provinces situated a thousand versts away, where I have never set foot, and in attending to which I can only commit a heap of contradictions and absurdities!"

But another spectacle was awaiting him. Having heard of the impending arrival of their master, the moujiks and women had assembled on the verandah; *soroki*,* *kitchi*,† kerchiefs, peasant-kirtles, beards, with all the picturesque accessories of a handsome population, surrounded him, while the words, "O thou our provider!" rang out, and the old men and women burst into involuntary tears as they recalled his grandfather and great-grandfather. He also could not refrain from tears, and said to

* Linen head-dresses, stitched with coloured wool or yarn, worn by peasant-women in the Ural.

† Also head-dresses.

himself, "How much love! And why? I had never seen them, never troubled myself about them!" Then he made a vow to share their labours with them, to attend to their wants, in order that their love might not be in vain, and so that he might really be their "provider."

Accordingly, he began to take charge of the management, and to make various arrangements. He diminished the compulsory service to the lord of the manor, leaving certain days of labour due to the master to the time allowed to the peasant. He dismissed the fool of an overseer. He began to examine into everything himself; showed himself in the fields, at the threshing-floor, near the grain-ricks, at the mills, the landing-stages, watching the lading and launching of rafts and flat-boats.

"There he is; see the brisk-legged fellow!" the peasants began to say, while they themselves began to grow indolent, and to scratch the backs of their heads.

But all this did not last long. The moujiks quickly learn the lay of the land. In this case they speedily understood that although the master was very alert, he had no idea so far as to the proper way of treating them. And although he spoke in a scholarly manner, it was not to the purpose. The result was, that the master and the peasant not only failed to understand each other and act in harmony, but were incapable of singing the same notes.

Tentyotnikoff soon observed that everything on the land belonging to himself did not thrive so well as it did on the peasants' land. The seed was sown earlier but came up later; and yet to all appearance the men worked well. He even presided over the work in person, and ordered a measure of brandy to be given to each man who worked assiduously. The peasants' rye had eared, their oats had yielded bountifully, their millet had developed stalks long before his grain had shown a stem. In a word, he began to perceive that the peasants were simply cheating him, in spite of all the privileges which he had conferred upon them.

He tried reproof, but merely received some such answer as the following: "How is it possible, master, that we should not rejoice in our lord's profit? You yourself graciously observed how hard we worked when we were ploughing and sowing. You ordered a measure of vodka apiece for us because we did so." What reply could be made to that?

"But why has it all turned out badly now?" the master asked.

"Who knows? Evidently some worms devoured the seed from below. And just remember what a summer we have had: there's been no rain at all."

But the master saw that no worms had devoured the peasants' crops from below, and that the rain had fallen in a peculiar way: it had favoured the peasants, but not one drop of it had watered the owner's fields.

It was still more difficult for him to manage the women. They were continually begging off from their work, and complaining of the master's impositions. It was strange! He had utterly abolished all tributes of linen, berries, mushrooms, and nuts; he had released them from fully half of their other labours, thinking that the women would devote this time to domestic affairs; that they would mend and make their husbands' clothes, and cultivate their vegetable gardens. However, nothing of the sort took place.

Idleness, quarrelling, gossiping, and all sorts of dissension arose among the fair sex, so that the husbands were continually coming to him with such words as these: "Master, take away that devil of a woman, my wife! she's a perfect fiend: there's no living with her!"

He hardened his heart, and tried to resort to sternness. But how could he be stern? A woman would come to him in the regular feminine fashion, weak and ill and whining, with the most horrible and disgusting rags heaped upon her—where she had got them, God only knows! "Go away, go home! take yourself out of my sight! God be with you!" said poor Tentyotnikoff; and then he saw the sick woman, as soon as she had emerged from his doors, fight with a neighbour over a beet-root and belabour the neighbour's sides in a way of which a healthy man would have been incapable.

It occurred to him to try the experiment of establishing a school among them, but this resulted in such folly that he hung his head in shame: it would have been better if he had not thought of it. Finally, in his discouragement his zeal faded away.

He superintended the work in an inattentive manner. If he stood near-by while the scythes were rustling softly through the grass, or the men were piling the hay in stacks, or loading it on waggons, his eyes gazed into the distance; if the work was proceeding afar, they sought objects near at hand, or glanced aside at some bend of the river, along the banks of which walked a red-billed, red-legged marten. He gazed at it with curiosity, as it held a fish, which it had caught crosswise in its bill, as though meditating whether it should swallow it or not; and then gazing intently across the river at another marten, gleaming white in the distance, he saw that it had not caught a fish, but was staring fixedly at the marten who had. Or else deserting both the martens and the bend of the river, screwing his eyes tight together, and throwing up his head towards the airy expanse, he inhaled the perfume of the fields, and listened to the voices of the melodious tenants of the air as they united in one harmonious chorus. He heard the woodcock piping in the rye, the landrail croaking in the grass, the linnets grumbling and twittering as they flitted past, the marsh-snipe shrieking as he rose in the air, the trills of the lark rolling down an invisible ladder of air, and the notes of the stork ringing out like the blasts of a trumpet as

it outlined a triangle in the sky. The whole neighbourhood, full of sound, gave back a delightful echo. But even all this began to bore him. He soon ceased to visit the fields altogether and sat in his own room, refusing even to receive the reports of the steward.

At first some people from the neighbourhood came to visit him—a retired lieutenant of hussars, redolent of tobacco; a student who had not completed his course but who held very decided opinions, and had gathered his wisdom from current pamphlets and newspapers. However, these visitors also began to bore Andrei. Their conversation seemed to him somewhat superficial: their European style and their familiarities were quite too frank and straightforward for his taste. He decided to cut short his acquaintance with everyone, and he effected this in a rather abrupt manner.

One day, when a retired colonel, a most agreeable superficial converser on all sorts of topics, called with the herald of the new order of thought, the student Varvar Nikolaitch Vishnepokromoff, in order to indulge in a long talk on politics, philosophy, literature, morals, and even the state of English finances—he sent word to say that he was not at home, and, at the same time, was so indiscreet as to show himself at the window. His eyes met those of one of the visitors. One, of course, muttered between his teeth, "The beast!" The other, in his vexation, sent some word like "pig" after the first. The acquaintanceship ended there. From that time forth, no one called at Tentyotnikoff's house.

He was glad of it, and devoted himself to planning a great work on Russia. The reader already knows in what manner he pursued this task. Still, now and then, there was a minute when he was thoroughly aroused from sleep. When the post brought him the newspapers and reviews, and he saw in print the familiar name of some former comrade, who had already succeeded in winning a conspicuous position in the imperial service, or had contributed something important to science or to universal progress, a secret and quiet sorrow penetrated his heart, and a pained, speechlessly sad, gentle complaint at his own inaction involuntarily burst forth. Then his life appeared to him to be hateful and repulsive. Then the vanished years of his life at school rose up before him with extraordinary vividness, and Alexander Petrovitch suddenly stood before him as though he were alive. Finally the tears poured from his eyes in streams.

What did these tears signify? Did his pining soul reveal in them the depressing secret of its disease—that the exalted inner man which had begun to take form within him had not succeeded in filling to its outlines, and fixing itself firmly? That, inexperienced from his very youth, he had not attained to that lofty state of mind to which he had hoped to rise and grow

strong on obstacles and limitations? That his remarkable teacher had died too soon, and that there was no one now in all the world who could arouse the powers kept down by perpetual indecision, who could say to him in a voice of encouragement that word, "Forward!" which the Russian thirsts for everywhere, no matter what class of society, trade, or calling he may belong to.

Who is he who has understood how to say to us, in our native tongue, that all-powerful word, *forward*? Who, knowing all the powers and qualities and all the depths of our natures, could, with one enchanting gesture of the hand, have directed us to higher life? With what tears, with what love, would the grateful Russian have requited him! But century after century has passed by in shameful indolence, Russia remains the same, in immature youth, God vouchsafing no man who knows how to pronounce that all-powerful word!

One circumstance came near rousing Tentyotnikoff, and nearly brought about some change in his character. Something in the nature of a love-affair took place. In the neighbourhood, at about ten versts from Tentyotnikoff's village, there dwelt a general, who lived as a general should—exercised hospitality, was fond of having his neighbours come to pay him their respects, talked in a hoarse voice, read books, and had a daughter—a being such as had never been seen before. It sometimes is vouchsafed to a man to behold something of the sort in his dreams; and from that time forth, throughout his life, he reflects upon that vision; reality has for ever disappeared for him, and he is absolutely good for nothing.

Her name was Ulinka. She had been rather strangely brought up. An Englishwoman, who did not know a word of Russian, had educated her. She had lost her mother in infancy, and her father had no time to attend to her. Moreover, as he loved her to madness, he might have merely spoiled her. She was self-willed in everything, like a child which has grown up in freedom. If anyone had seen how a sudden outburst of wrath brought a collection of deep wrinkles to her lovely brow, and how warmly she disputed with her father, he would have thought that she was a very capricious creature. But her wrath only flashed up when she heard of some injustice, or of some ill-treatment. She never disputed on her own account, and she never defended herself; and her anger disappeared on the instant if she saw the person against whom it was directed in trouble. At the first request for alms, no matter from whom it proceeded, she gave all that she had, before she even had time to reflect on the impropriety of flinging away her purse with everything which it contained.

There was something impetuous about her. When she spoke, it seemed as though everything followed her thoughts: the expression of her countenance, the tone of her voice, the move-

ments of her hands, the very folds of her garments, all seemed to incline in the same direction, and it was as though she were on the point of flying after her own words. There was no reserve about her. She never feared to reveal her thoughts to anyone, and no power on earth could reduce her to silence when she wished to speak. Moreover, her peculiar and bewitching walk was so free and unconstrained that anyone would involuntarily make way for her. In her presence a wicked man grew confused and silent; the most audacious and unrestrained in his language found not a word to say to her, but lost his wits: though the shy man was able to converse with her as he had never done with anyone else in all his life, and felt from the first moment of the conversation as if he had known her somewhere before, and had already beheld her features; it seemed to him that this had happened in the depths of his boyhood in some familiar house, on a merry evening, amid the joyous games of a throng of children; and for a long time afterwards the man's age of discretion seemed wearisome to him.

The very same thing happened in the case of Tentyotnikoff. It seemed to him, from the first day of their acquaintance, that he had always known her. A new, inexplicable sensation penetrated his soul; for an instant a gleam of light illumined his wearisome life. At first the general received the young fellow well and gladly, but they could not get on together. Their conversations ended in disputes, and left a certain unpleasant feeling on both sides: for the general was not fond of contradiction or retorts; and Tentyotnikoff, on his side, was quick to take offence. Of course he forgave the father a great deal for the daughter's sake; and peace was preserved between them, until some relatives came to visit the general—Countess Boduireva and Princess Yuzyakina, who had been maids of honour at court during the preceding reign, and who now kept up some connections with Petersburg, in consequence of which the general paid them great deference. From the very day of their arrival, it seemed to Tentyotnikoff that he was treated more coldly—that he was overlooked, or regarded as a person of no importance: he was addressed in a somewhat unduly familiar fashion as "My dearest fellow!" "Listen, my friend!" and indeed once the general even said "thou" to him.

This last enraged him. Nevertheless, hardening his heart and setting his teeth, he had the presence of mind to say, in an unusually soft and courteous tone, while a spot of crimson made its appearance on his face, and everything within him was boiling, "I am obliged to you for your kindly sentiments, general. By employing the word *thou*, you display an amount of friendship which almost induces me to address you as *thou* also. But the difference in our ages precludes such familiarity between us."

The general was thrown into confusion. Collecting his words and ideas, he began to say, though in rather an incoherent manner,

that the word *thou* had not been uttered by him in that sense; that it was permissible for an old man to say *thou* to a young one, and so on. It may be noted that he did not utter a syllable about his rank.

Of course, their acquaintance ceased from that moment, and the love affair came to an end at its very outset. The light which had shone for an instant before Tentyotnikoff was extinguished, and the shadows which followed upon it seemed all the blacker. His life, indeed, became what the reader has seen at the beginning of this chapter—it was all converted into lying in bed and inactivity. Dirt and disorder took possession of his house. The broom stood for half a day in the middle of the floor, in company with the dirt. His old trousers even strayed into the drawing-room. On the elegant little table which stood in front of the divan there lay a pair of braces, just as though they had been refreshment for a visitor. Our young friend's existence had become trivial and slothful to such a degree that not only did his servants cease to respect him, but the very cocks and hens pecked at him.

Upon tâking his pen in hand, he would pass hours in sketching crooked trees, little houses, peasants' huts, telyégas, and troïkas, in a vacant-minded way. However, sometimes, when he had forgotten everything, the pen, of its own will and without its master's knowledge, drew a little head with delicate features, with an alert penetrating glance, and a lock of hair turned back; and the master then, to his amazement, saw that this was the portrait of one whose portrait no artist even could have sketched. And then he became still more melancholy; and, believing that there is no such thing as happiness upon earth, he grew more bored and silent than before.

Such was the condition of Andrei Ivanovitch Tentyotnikoff's soul. All at once, while he was one day walking to the window, pipe and cup in hand, after the usual order of things, he was stupefied not to hear either Grigoriy or Perfilievna, but he did perceive a bustle and some hurrying to and fro in the yard. The scullion and the floor-washer were hastening to open the gates, at which, indeed, some horses were visible, exactly like the horses which are carved or drawn on triumphal arches—a muzzle to the right, a muzzle to the left, and a muzzle in the middle. Above them, on the box, sat a coachman, and a footman in voluminous surtouts. Behind them sat a gentleman in a leather-peaked cap and a cloak, with a scarf of rainbow hues around his neck. When the equipage drew up before the porch with a sweep, it became apparent that it was nothing less than a light britchka on springs. The gentleman, who possessed an extremely pleasing exterior, sprang out of it, with almost the alertness and agility of a military man.

Andrei Ivanovitch was struck with terror. He took the visitor for an official from the courts of justice. It must be stated

that, in his youth, he had become entangled in a piece of folly. Two philosophers belonging to the hussars, who instead of completing their course in æsthetics, had ruined themselves as gamblers, had got up some philanthropical society or other, under the chief superintendence of an old mason, a rascal who was also a gambler, but at the same time a very eloquent man. This society was organised with extensive views—to procure lasting happiness for everyone, from the banks of the Thames to Kamtchatka. A vast amount of money was required, and contributions were collected among the generous members. Where all this money went to, no one knew, excepting the manager-in-chief. He had inveigled into the company two friends, embittered men who had originally been decent fellows, but who had been transformed into regular drunkards by dint of drinking toasts in the honour of science, culture, and the coming responsibilities of mankind. Tentyotnikoff soon recovered his senses and freed himself from this circle. But the society had already succeeded in entangling him in some operations of a character not exactly suited to a nobleman, so that an affair with the police ensued. Thus, it is not surprising that, although he had left the capital, and broken off all connection with the society, he did not feel quite at ease. His conscience was not quite clear, and indeed it was with some alarm that he now gazed at the door as it opened.

However, his terror vanished at once when his visitor, after bowing with incredible skill, somewhat on one side, but keeping his head in a respectful position, explained, in soft but decisive words, that he had recently been traversing Russia, impelled by both business and curiosity; that the empire abounded in noteworthy objects, not to mention the abundance of trades and the variety of soils to be found; that he had been attracted by the picturesque situation of the village, but that he should not have ventured to intrude, if, in consequence of the spring floods and the bad roads, his equipage had not sustained an unexpected fracture, which required the intervention of a blacksmith and some artisans. However, he added that, even if no accident had happened to his britchka, he could not have denied himself the pleasure of personally presenting his respects.

On finishing this speech, the guest, with bewitching suavity, gave a scrape of his foot, which was shod in an elegant varnished shoe, fastened with mother-of-pearl buttons, and, notwithstanding his corpulence, he sprang backwards with the lightness of an india-rubber ball.

Andrei Ivanovitch felt re-assured, and concluded that this must be some inquisitive professor, who was travelling through Russia for the purpose of collecting some plants or other, or possibly fossils. He immediately expressed his readiness to render every assistance in his power; he offered the services of his artisans, his wheelwrights and blacksmiths; he requested the stranger to dispose of everything as though he were in his

own house; he even seated him in his own large reclining-chair, and then prepared to listen to his remarks upon the natural sciences.

But the guest touched rather upon philosophical matters. He likened his life to a vessel in the midst of the sea, driven hither and thither by treacherous winds; he mentioned that he had been obliged to make numerous changes in his place of residence and his occupation; that he had suffered much for the truth's sake; that his life had even been more than once in danger from his enemies; and he related many things of a sort which showed him to be a practical man. At the conclusion of his speech, he blew his nose in a white cambric handkerchief, with such violence that it gave a report the like of which Andrei Ivanovitch had never heard before. There is at times in an orchestra a horn which seems to blare in your ear, instead of in the orchestra. Exactly such a sound echoed through the startled apartments of the slumbering house; and immediately after it came the smell of *eau-de-Cologne*, which was invisibly disseminated by a skilful flourish of the cambric pocket-handkerchief.

The reader has probably already divined that the visitor was none other than our respected and long-neglected Pavel Ivanovitch Tchitchikoff. He had grown a little older evidently; time had not passed by without tempests and anxieties. It seemed as though the very swallow-tailed coat on his back had grown antique, and the britchka, and the coachman and the valet, the horses and the harness, had all become worn and threadbare. From this it appeared that his finances were not in an enviable condition. However, the expression of his face, his courtesy, and his manners remained the same. He had become even more agreeable in his movements and conduct, and he twisted one leg under the other in a more skilful fashion than ever when he seated himself in his arm-chair. There was more suavity in his turns of speech, more caution and moderation in his words and expressions, more dexterity in his bearing, more tact about him in every way. His collar and shirt-bosom were cleaner and whiter than snow, and despite the fact that he was on a journey, there was not even a speck of dust upon his coat—it was exactly as though he had just come from a birthday dinner. His cheeks and chin were so beautifully shaven that even a blind man might have admired their agreeably rounded contours.

A transformation at once took place in the house. That half of it which had hitherto remained dark, with the shutters closed, suddenly blossomed out and received light. Everything began to move about in the newly illuminated rooms, and matters soon assumed a different aspect. All the articles indispensable for a toilet for the night were placed in the chamber which was assigned to the visitor as a bedroom. As for the apartment which was intended for his study, there were here three tables: one, a writing-table, stood before the sofa; the second, a card-table,

was placed between the two windows and in front of the mirror; the third, a corner-table, stood in the angle between the door leading to the bedroom and the door opening into an unoccupied hall, filled with decrepit furniture, and now used as an ante-room, in which no one had set foot for a year previously. On this corner-table some clothes which had been taken out of our hero's trunk were placed, namely, a coat, beneath it a pair of trousers, a second pair ditto quite new, and grey in colour, also two velvet and two satin waistcoats, and a surtout. All these things were arranged one on the top of the other in pyramid fashion, and were covered over with a silk handkerchief. In the other corner between the door and the window was ranged a row of boots: some were not quite new, others were entirely new; there were patent-leather boots, low shoes, and chamber slippers. They also were modestly veiled with a silk handkerchief, so that it was just the same as if they were not there.

On the writing-table were speedily arranged with great regularity a dressing-case, a bottle of *eau-de-Cologne*, some toothpicks, a calendar, and two novels—the second volume of each only. The clean linen was placed in the chest of drawers which stood in the bedroom, and the linen which required washing was tied up in a bundle and thrust under the bed; the trunk, when it had been emptied, was also shoved under the bed. As for the sword which our hero carried with him on the road in order to inspire robbers with salutary fear, that also was placed in the bedroom, and suspended from a nail not far from the bed. Everything assumed an aspect of neatness and order. Nowhere was there a scrap of paper, a pen, or a speck of dust. The very air seemed to have become ennobled. The odour of a fresh and healthy man who does not wear his linen too long, but takes a bath and rubs himself down with a damp sponge every Sunday, began to fill the apartment. The odour of the valet Petrushka attempted for a time to establish itself in the ante-room; however, Petrushka was speedily transferred to the kitchen, as was fitting.

At first Andrei Ivanovitch feared for his independence; he was alarmed lest any visitor should embarrass him with any changes in his mode of life, which was so cleverly arranged. But his fears were unfounded. Our hero, Pavel Ivanovitch, displayed a remarkable capacity for adapting himself to all circumstances. He expressed his approval of his host's philosophical and methodical disposition, saying that it promised to prolong his life for a century. With regard to solitude, he expressed himself very happily to the effect that it promoted grand thoughts in a man. Then after glancing into the library and praising books in general, he remarked that they rescued a man from idleness. He let fall but few words, but those few were weighty. In his behaviour he displayed even more tact. He made his appearance just at the proper time, and he vanished at the very moment which was fitting; he did not worry his host with questions during the

latter's taciturn moods; he took pleasure in playing at chess with him, and he enjoyed keeping silent. While one of them was emitting curling wreaths of smoke from his pipe, the other, who did not smoke, devised an occupation which corresponded with it: for example, he pulled a snuffbox of oxidized silver from his pocket, and grasping it firmly between two fingers of his left hand, he twirled it briskly with his right fore-finger—so that it looked like the earth whirling on its axis—or else he drummed on the cover with his finger, and whistled all the while. In short, he did not incommode his entertainer in the least.

"I now behold for the first time a man with whom it is possible to live," said Tentyotnikoff to himself. "On the whole, this is rare among us. There are plenty of people who are learned and cultivated and good, but as for people of a perfectly equable temperament, people with whom one could pass one's life without quarrelling, I really do not know whether many such persons are to be found anywhere. At all events, this is the first man of the sort whom I have seen." Thus did Tentyotnikoff express himself with regard to his visitor.

Tchitchikoff, on his side, felt very glad that he had quartered himself for a time at the house of this quiet and peaceable young man. He had grown tired of his gipsy life. Even from a sanitary point of view, it would prove advantageous to rest for a month in this lovely village, in sight of the meadows and the budding spring.

It would have been difficult to find a nook better suited for repose. The spring, long retarded, was suddenly bursting forth in all its beauty, and life was beginning to display itself in every direction. The fresh and early emerald verdure was dotted with yellow dandelions, while the purple anemone nodded its graceful head. Swarms of gnats and other insects made their appearance in the swamps: the water-spider was already hastening in pursuit of them, and birds of every species assembled among the dry reeds. Ducks and all other kinds of water-fowl fluttered down upon the flooded lakes and rivers. The earth all at once became populous; the forests awoke from their sleep; the meadows became vocal. How brilliant was the verdure! how fresh the air! What bird-calls rang through the gardens! what echoes, what cries of joy from everything! The village was full of harmony, and song, as though a wedding were going on. Walks were taken in every direction, and Tchitchikoff himself walked a great deal.

At one time he directed his course to the summit of the hill, which afforded a view of the spreading valleys below, where there still lingered some wide lakes formed by the inundations, with islands of still leafless forest lying darkly in their midst; or else he strolled through the wooded ravines, where the thickly clustering trees, weighed down with the nests of cawing rooks, which obscured the heavens with their fitful flittings, were

beginning to deck themselves with leaves. Again he betook himself over to the wharf, whence the first boats were setting out, laden with peas and barley and wheat, while the water dashed noisily against the wheel of the mill, which was just beginning to work. He went to inspect the first spring husbandry—he watched the plough turn up black strips of earth amid the green ; or saw how the dexterous sower, tapping the sieve which hung from his breast, scattered the seed evenly and in the right spot, so that not a grain fell on either one side or the other.

Indeed Tchitchikoff went everywhere. He talked and discussed things with the overseer, with the peasants, and with the miller. He knew everybody and all about everything, the how and the why ; in what fashion the affairs of the estate were progressing, and how much the grain sold for, how much of it was sent to be ground in the autumn, and how much in the spring, together with the names of all the moujiks, and where this one had purchased his cow, and what that one fed his pigs on—in short, everything. He also learned how many peasants had died, and it appeared that they were not numerous. Being a man of discernment, he perceived that, so far as his pet scheme went, matters would not progress well with Andrei Ivanovitch. On the other hand, ignorance, neglect, thieving, and intoxication prevailed everywhere. And he said to himself, in his own mind, "What a fool that Tentyotnikoff is! Such an estate, and to neglect it so! He might have an income of fifty thousand roubles a year!"

More than once it occurred to him, in the course of his walks, that he would some time—that is to say, not now, but later on, when his principal business had been settled, and he had the means on hand—become the peaceful owner of some such estate as this one. Then, naturally, there presented itself to his imagination the figure of a rosy, fair-haired young girl, from the merchant or some other wealthy social class, and who would even understand music. A younger generation, destined to perpetuate the name of Tchitchikoff, also presented itself to him —a frolicsome little boy and a beautiful daughter, or two small urchins and two, or even three, little maidens, so that it might be known to all men that he had actually lived and existed, and had not merely passed over the earth like a shadow or a ghost.

Then he began to fancy that it would not be a bad idea to make some additions to his rank : "councillor of state," for instance, is an honourable title, and one deserving of respect. How many things enter a man's mind in the course of his walks! They frequently divert him from the wearisome present, mock him, torment him, excite his imagination, and remain dear to him even when he himself feels convinced that they will never be realised!

The village also pleased Pavel Ivanovitch's servants. They, like himself, had become accustomed to it. Petrushka speedily

struck up a friendship with the butler, Grigoriy, although at first both of them assumed a great deal of dignity, and put on some intolerable airs in speaking to each other. Petrushka tried to lord it over Grigoriy on the strength of having seen so many places; but Grigoriy promptly quenched him with Petersburg, where Petrushka had never been. The latter then attempted to recover his position, and launched into details as to the distance of the places which he had visited; but Grigoriy mentioned a place which is not to be found on any map, and reckoned up over thirty thousand versts, so that Pavel Ivanovitch's servitor remained dumbfounded, dropped his jaw, and was then and there held up to the ridicule of all the domestics. The matter ended, however, in a close friendship springing up between the valet and the butler. Bald Pimen, a peasant, kept a drinking-shop at the end of the village, and here the two cronies were to be seen at all hours of the day. They became perfectly at home there, or, as the peasants expressed it, "fixtures."

Selifan, on his side, found a different sort of attraction. As soon as evening came, the village maids sang songs, and wove and broke the chain of the spring *khorovods*.* The girls, finely formed creatures of good race, such as are not now to be found in the large villages, kept him playing at "raven" for hours together. It was hard to tell which of them was the prettiest: they all had white necks, white bosoms, and bright, rolling eyes; they walked like peacocks, and wore plaits of hair hanging to their waists. When, taking their white hands in both of his, he moved slowly with them in the choral dance, or left them and stationed himself with the other lads in a line opposite them, all the gallants stepping forward in rank to meet the maidens, while the latter, laughing loudly, sang, "Lords, show the bridegroom!"—then, while the fading light of evening vanished, and the shades descended all around, the mournful echo of their song ringing back from far beyond the river, he himself did not know what was going on within him. Morning and evening, sleeping or waking, thereafter, all things danced before his eyes, and he seemed to hold white hands in his own, and to be ever moving through the choral dance.

Tchitchikoff's horses also were content with their new abode. The oats were excellent, and the arrangements of the stable were remarkably comfortable. From each stall, although it was divided off, it was possible to see the other horses over the partitions; and if any one of them, even the most distant of the lot, took a foolish fancy to neigh, it was possible to hear him at once.

In short, they all felt quite at home. As far as the business upon which Pavel Ivanovitch was traversing far-reaching Russia —the dead souls—was concerned, he had become extremely cautious and delicate, even when he had to deal with downright

* Dances accompanied by songs and games.

fools. And he had to be all the more cautious with Tentyotnikoff, for the latter was certainly not a fool; he read books, and philosophised, and tried to explain to himself the cause of everything. "No; it will be better to see whether he cannot be approached more successfully in another manner," thought Tchitchikoff, who, during his chats with the house-serfs, had found out that their master had formerly been in the habit of going to see his neighbour, the general, very frequently. He had learnt, too, that the general had a daughter; that their master had evidently been made for the young lady, and the young lady for their master. However, they had fallen out all of a sudden, and had parted. Moreover, our hero himself had observed that Andrei Ivanovitch was always sketching heads with his pen and pencil, and that these heads all resembled one another.

Once, after dinner, while twirling his silver snuff-box round as usual, our hero began as follows: "You have everything in the world, Andrei Ivanovitch; yes, everything save one."

"What is that?" inquired the host, emitting a wreath of smoke.

"A companion for your life," said Tchitchikoff.

But Andrei Ivanovitch said nothing, and there the conversation rested.

Tchitchikoff was not disconcerted, however; in fact, he chose another opportunity, just before supper. While they were discussing one thing and another, he suddenly remarked, "Why, really, Andrei Ivanovitch, it wouldn't be a bad thing for you if you married."

Not a word did Tentyotnikoff respond to this, exactly as though the subject were displeasing to him.

Still Tchitchikoff was not discouraged. He selected a third occasion, after supper, and then spoke thus: "However much I turn your circumstances over in my mind, it seems to me quite necessary for you to marry: you are falling into hypochondria."

On this occasion, Tchitchikoff's words were very decisive, or else Tentyotnikoff's frame of mind was favourable to frankness—at all events, the young fellow sighed, and said, "In love, as in everything else, one needs to be born lucky, Pavel Ivanovitch." And then he related to him the whole history of his acquaintance with the general, and of the quarrel, just as it had taken place.

When Tchitchikoff had heard the whole story, word by word, and learnt that the entire matter had arisen from the word *thou*, he was taken aback. For a moment he looked Tentyotnikoff fixedly in the eyes, and could not decide whether he was simply a fool or a thorough lunatic.

"Pray, Andrei Ivanovitch," he said at length, taking him by both hands, "what insult was there in that? What is there offensive about the word *thou*?"

"There's nothing offensive about the word itself," answered Tentyotnikoff; "but there may be in its application, in the way

in which it is uttered; that's where the insult lies. *Thou*—that signifies, 'Recollect that you are a good-for-nothing fellow. I only receive you here because there is no one better than you in the neighbourhood; but now a certain Princess Yuzyakina has come, so learn to know your place, and remain on the threshold.' That's what it means!" So saying, the eyes of the gentle and peaceable Andrei Ivanovitch flashed: and the irritation of his wounded feelings was audible in his voice.

"But even in that sense, what harm does it do?" asked Tchitchikoff.

"What! Do you think that I should continue to visit him after such misconduct?"

"But what misconduct? That is not misconduct," said Tchitchikoff.

"Why is it not misconduct?" inquired Tentyotnikoff in amazement.

"Oh! it is merely a habit with generals, and not misconduct; they say *thou* to everybody. And, moreover, why should it not be allowable in a worthy man who has served his time honourably?"

"That's a different thing," said Tentyotnikoff. "If he had been an old man, or a poor man, neither proud nor boastful, nor a general, I would willingly permit him to address me as *thou*."

"This fellow's an utter fool!" said Tchitchikoff to himself. "The idea of permitting a thing to a ragamuffin, and not to a general!—Very well," he said aloud, "let us assume that he did insult you; well, you have had your revenge on him: he said 'thou' to you, and you said it to him. But to quarrel, to part for ever on account of a trifle, that is—you must excuse me—absurd. When a man has chosen his goal, he must bid defiance to all obstacles. Why consider the fact that a man spits at you? Man is always spitting: that's the way he is made. And you may search the whole world through now for a man who has not at some time spat at another man, and you won't find one."

"A strange man this Tchitchikoff!" said Tentyotnikoff to himself in surprise, quite disconcerted by these words.

"But what an eccentric fellow this Tentyotnikoff is!" Tchitchikoff was thinking at the same moment. "Andrei Ivanovitch, I will talk with you like a brother to a brother. You are an inexperienced man. Allow me to manage this affair. I will go to his excellency, and explain to him that it happened through a misunderstanding on your side—through your youth and lack of acquaintance with men and with the world."

"I have no intention of humbling myself to him," said Tentyotnikoff, taking offence; "and I cannot authorise you to do so on my behalf."

"I am incapable of acting improperly," retorted Tchitchikoff, also offended. "Of other errors I may have been guilty, in

common with the rest of mankind, but of baseness, never! Excuse me, Andrei Ivanovitch, but I did not expect that you would take my words in such an insulting sense." All this was spoken with an air of dignity.

"I am in the wrong; forgive me," said Tentyotnikoff hastily, and with emotion, seizing hold of both his hands. "I did not think of wounding you. I swear to you that your kindly sympathy is dear to me. But let us drop this discussion. We will never mention it again."

"In that case I shall go to the general."

"Why?" asked Tentyotnikoff, looking our hero straight in the eyes in his amazement.

"To present my respects."

"A strange fellow this Tchitchikoff!" thought Tentyotnikoff.

"A strange fellow this Tentyotnikoff!" thought Tchitchikoff.

"I shall go to him at about ten o'clock to-morrow morning, Andrei Ivanovitch. In my opinion, the sooner one pays one's respects to a man the better. As my britchka is not yet in a suitable condition, allow me to use your calash. In that way, I shall be able to reach his house at about ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

"Certainly; what a request! You are completely master here, and the equipage and everything else are entirely at your disposal."

After this conversation they separated and went off to bed, not without meditating on each other's peculiarities.

The affair was really very singular. The next morning, when the horses were brought round for Tchitchikoff, and he sprang into the calash, with almost as much agility as a military man, in a new coat, a white neckcloth and waistcoat, and drove off to pay his respects to the general, Tentyotnikoff was assailed by feelings such as he had not experienced for a long time. His rusty, dreamy thoughtfulness was converted into active disquietude. A nervous emotion suddenly overpowered all the other feelings of this idler, who had hitherto been wholly engrossed in heedless indolence. He now seated himself on the sofa; then he strayed to the window, then picked up a book, then tried to think, but his endeavours were fruitless! Not a thought entered his brain. Then he tried to avoid thinking of anything—vain effort! Fragments of something resembling thought, odds and ends, crept in from everywhere, and clung to his brain. "What a strange state of mind!" he said, and he approached the window, to gaze at the road which cut through the gloomy forest, at the extremity of which the dust raised by the departing calash was still revolving like smoke. But let us abandon Tentyotnikoff, and follow our hero to the general's.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

AN ANCIENT RELIC OF 1812

In a little more than half an hour, the good horses carried Tchitchikoff a distance of ten versts,* first through the dense forest, then between the fields of grain, which were already beginning to show green through the freshly ploughed soil; then along a rocky ridge, whence views of the distant landscape were at each moment disclosed; then up a broad avenue of lime-trees, which had as yet hardly put forth their leaves. He thus proceeded to the very centre of the village. Here the avenue of lime-trees made a turn to the right and changed into a street of poplars, hemmed in below by a fence, which terminated in some open-work iron gates, through which peeped the façade of the general's house, resting on eight Corinthian columns, and richly ornamented with florid carving. Paint had been applied everywhere; everything was kept in due repair, and nothing was allowed to fall into decay. The courtyard resembled a polished wooden floor in cleanliness. Driving up to the entrance, Tchitchikoff sprang out, asked to be announced to the general, and was forthwith conducted to the latter's study.

The general surprised him by his magnificent personal appearance. He was clad in a wadded satin dressing gown, of a superb purple hue. His glance was frank, his face manly; his moustache and bushy whiskers were streaked with grey; his hair was clipped close behind his head, allowing a full view of his thick neck, which was of the sort known as "three-storey," having three folds, with a transverse crease. In a word, he was one of those picturesque generals in whom the famous year '12 abounded.

General Betrishtcheff was indeed possessed of a multitude of good qualities and of a multitude of defects. As is usual with Russians, both were mingled within him in a sort of picturesque disorder. In decisive moments he displayed magnanimity, valour, wisdom, an unbounded generosity in everything, and mingled with this, caprices of ambition, and that petty personal touchiness which no single Russian can ever dispense with when he is sitting in idleness, and when no demands are made upon his decision. He did not like those who had outstripped him in the service.

* A verst is about three-quarters of a mile.

but expressed himself in biting terms and pointed epigrams with regard to them. The one who suffered most of all was a former comrade, whom he regarded as an inferior to himself in brains and capacity, but who had, nevertheless, risen above him, being already governor-general of two provinces, and, as though on purpose to spite him, of the very two in which his own estates were situated, so that he found himself dependent upon his rival, as it were. In revenge, General Betrishtcheff slandered his ex-comrade on every possible occasion, blamed every regulation which he made, and regarded every measure he took as the height of folly.

There was something strange about our general. He loved incense; he loved brilliancy; he was fond of boasting of his brains; he was also fond of knowing things which other people did not know, and he did not like the people who knew anything of which he was ignorant. Although he had received a semi-foreign education, he was desirous of playing the part of a Russian gentleman in perfection. And it is not to be wondered at that with such unevenness, with such strong and salient contradictions of character, he should have experienced in the service a multitude of vexations, in consequence of which he had handed in his resignation, laying the blame of his worry on some inimical party, since he lacked the magnanimity to assume any portion of the blame himself. He preserved, in his retirement, the picturesquely grand demeanour of his profession. He was always the same, whether clad in a dress-coat, a surtout, or a dressing-gown. From the tone of his voice to the slightest movement of his body, everything about him was masterly and commanding; and inspired, if not respect, at least fear, in the lower ranks.

Tchitchikoff experienced mingled fear and respect. Bending his head reverentially on one side, and making a fleeting outward movement with his hands, as though preparing to lift a tray full of cups, he inclined his body with wonderful agility, and said, "I have regarded it as my duty to present myself to your excellency. Cherishing as I do a reverence for the valour of the men who saved their country upon the field of battle, I have regarded it as my duty to present myself in person to your excellency."

This proceeding was evidently not displeasing to the general. With an exceedingly condescending movement of the head, he said, "I am very glad to make your acquaintance. I beg you to do me the favour to take a seat. Where have you served?"

"My career in the service," replied Tchitchikoff, seating himself in the arm-chair, not in the middle, but sideways, and grasping the arms with his hands, "began in the department of justice, your excellency. Its latter course was completed in discharging various duties—in the superior courts, on a building commission, and in the custom-house service. My life may be likened to a vessel amid the billows, your excellency. In patience, as I may say, I was born and swaddled; and I am, so to speak

patience itself personified. But as for the enemies who have sought my life, no words, no colours, so to speak, can possibly portray them in a proper manner. Hence, in the decline of life, I am merely seeking a nook where I may pass the remnant of my days. I have been stopping for a while with a near neighbour of your excellency."

"Who is that?"

"Tentyotnikoff, your excellency."

The general frowned.

"He greatly regrets, your excellency, that he did not show proper respect."

"To what?"

"To your excellency's merits. He finds no words—— He says, 'If I could in any way atone—for truly I have not known how to value the men who saved our fatherland.'"

"Pray, what is he thinking of? I'm not angry with him," said the mollified general. "From my soul I sincerely like him, and I am convinced that he will become a very useful man in the course of time."

"You have been pleased to express yourself admirably, your excellency. Really, a most useful man: perhaps he will conquer the world with his gift of language; he is a master with his pen."

"I suppose he writes some sort of nonsense—verses, eh?"

"No, your excellency, not nonsense. He is writing something practical—history, your excellency."

"History? The history of what?"

"The history"—here Tchitchikoff paused; and whether it was because the general was sitting opposite him, or else because he wished to impart more weight to the subject, he added, "The history of generals, your excellency."

"Of generals? Of what generals?"

"Of generals in general, your excellency; of generals as a body. That is, to speak accurately, of the generals of our country." Tchitchikoff had become completely entangled and had lost his head; he could not help saying to himself, "Heavens, what nonsense I am talking!"

"Excuse me, I do not understand you very clearly. What is it about? Is it to be the history of some particular period, or a series of separate biographies? and of all our generals or only of those who were engaged in the war of 1812?"

"Exactly so, your excellency; of those who took part in the war of 1812." Having thus spoken, our hero said to himself, "May I be hanged if I understand it!"

"Then why doesn't he come to see me? I could furnish him with a very great quantity of curious materials."

"He is afraid, your excellency."

"What nonsense! On account of a few idle words! But I'm not that kind of a man at all. I am willing to go to see him, if you like."

"He will not permit that: he will come to you," said Tchitchikoff recovering himself. As he regained his courage he thought "What a chance! I came to the general's just at the right time! But my tongue has been rattling away like a fool's."

At this moment a rustling sound became audible in the study. A walnut-wood door opened, and a living form appeared, holding the bronze knob in its hand. If a transparent picture, brilliantly illuminated by lights from behind, had suddenly made its appearance in the dark room, it would not have produced a more startling effect. The girl who thus presented herself had evidently entered for the purpose of saying something to the general, but had stopped short on catching sight of the stranger. It seemed as though a ray of sunshine had flitted in with her, and as though the general's frowning study had burst into a laugh. Straight and light as an arrow, she seemed taller than most of her sex. But this was an illusion, for she was not of such lofty stature. It was the result of the remarkably harmonious combination of all the proportions of her body. Her gown fitted her as though the very best dressmakers had taken counsel together as to how they might best adorn her. But this also was an illusion. She dressed herself: she pricked her needle into some material or other, and it at once draped and arranged itself around her in such loops and folds that, if she had been transferred to canvas with all these bewitching draperies, she would have been pronounced the copy of a work of genius. All fashionably dressed young ladies would have appeared like the motley products of the rag-market, in her presence. However, despite all her comeliness, she was somewhat too thin and slender.

"Let me introduce my spoiled pet to you," said the general, turning to Tchitchikoff. "But I do not yet know your names."

"Is the name of a man who has never distinguished himself by his merits of any consequence?" asked Tchitchikoff, modestly dropping his head.

"Still, it is necessary to know."

"Pavel Ivanovitch, your excellency," replied Tchitchikoff, bowing with almost the skill of a military man, and skipping backwards with the lightness of an india-rubber ball.

"Ulinka," said the general, turning to his daughter, "Pavel Ivanovitch has just imparted some interesting news to me. Our neighbour, Tentyotnikoff, is not at all so stupid a fellow as we supposed. He is occupied with a rather important work—the history of the generals of 1812."

"But who thought that he was a stupid man?" hastily remarked the girl. "No one, probably, excepting Vishnepokromoff, whom you put faith in, and who is a base and empty-headed fellow."

"Why is he base? He is rather empty-headed; that's true," said the general.

"He is not only empty-headed, but mean and crafty. A

man who has insulted his brothers and driven his sister out of the paternal house, must be a mean fellow."

"But that is only what people say."

"Such things are not said without cause. I do not understand, father, how anyone with your kind soul, and with such a rare heart as you have, can receive a man who is as far removed from you as heaven is from earth, and whom you yourself know to be bad."

"There, you see," said the general, smiling at Tchitchikoff, "that's the way she and I always quarrel with each other"; and turning to his daughter, he continued, "But, my love, I cannot drive him away."

"Why should you drive him away? But why show him so much attention? Why pet him?"

Here Tchitchikoff thought it incumbent on him to interpose a word. "Everyone asks for love, *sudaruinya*,* said Tchitchikoff. "What is to be done? Even animals like to be stroked. Bears will thrust their muzzles through the bars of their cages, as much as to say, 'Come, pat me!'"

The general broke into a laugh. "They really do thrust their muzzles through: 'Come, pat me!' Ha, ha, ha! And there are some who are not content with all that, but want you to come into their dens, and demand encouragement, as it were. Ha, ha, ha!" and the general's sides began to quiver with laughter. His shoulders, which had formerly supported his heavy epaulets, shook too, exactly as though they still upheld those ornamental appendages.

Tchitchikoff also gave a laugh, but out of respect for the general, he emitted it in the letter *e*—"He, he! he, he, he!" And his body also began to quiver with laughter, but his shoulders did not shake, because they had never worn heavy epaulets.

"A man will steal, he will rob the treasury, and yet demand a reward for it, the beast! 'It's impossible,' says he, 'to labour without encouragement.' Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Has your excellency ever heard that story, 'Love us while we are dirty, everyone will love us when we're clean,'" said Tchitchikoff, turning to the general with rather a roguish smile.

"No, I have never heard it."

"It is a most curious anecdote, your excellency. On the estate of Prince Gukzovsky, whom your excellency probably knows——"

"No, I do not know him."

"Well, there was a German overseer there, your excellency,—a young man. He had occasion to go to the city in connection with recruiting and other matters, and had some dealings with the judicial authorities; now do you know, he greased their hands." (Tchitchikoff here screwed up one eye, and indicated by his countenance how one "greases" the hands of public

* *Sudaruinya*, miss or madam.

officials.) "Well, they entertained him on one occasion, and while he was dining with them, he says, 'Gentlemen, you must come and visit me one of these days on the prince's estate.' They reply, 'We will.' It chanced, your excellency, that a short time afterwards the judges had to make some investigatious concerning an affair which had occurred on the estate of Count Trekhmetieff, whom your excellency is no doubt pleased to——"

"No, I do not know him."

"Well, the did not make the investigations, but they turned their telyéga into the farm-yard, went to the house-steward's apartments, and played cards for three days and nights wihotut stopping to draw breath. The samover and the punch, your excellency, never left the table. They fairly stuck in the throat of the count's steward, so to speak." (Here Tchitchikoff pointed at his own throat.) "In order to get rid of them, he says, 'You should go to see the prince's overseer, gentlemen, the German; he is not far off, and he is expecting you.'—'Ah, surely!' say they, 'he invited us.' So all of them, all sleepy and unshaven as they were, with dirty hands and faces, got into their telyéga, and drove off to the German's. But the German, your excellency, had just been married. He had married a schoolgirl, a pretty and subtle young woman." (Tchitchikoff here expressed her subtlety in his countenance.) "Being so to speak, in the midst of their honeymoon, they were sitting over their tea like two dear little angels, when all of a sudden the door opened, and the assemblage burst in upon them."

"I can imagine it; very good," said the general, laughing.

"This so surprised the German, your excellency, that he quite lost his head. He steps up to the officials, and says, 'What do you want, you dirty louts?'—'Well, you're a pretty fellow!' they reply: 'a different turn of matters demands a different turn of speech. We've come on business,' they add. 'How much brandy is distilled on this estate? Show your books!' He stammered this and that. 'Ei, off with him!' they shouted, and then they seized him, bound him, carried him to town, and there he remained in prison for a year and a half."

"Well, I declare!" said the general.

Ulinka clasped her hands.

"His wife, your excellency, began to make a fuss. But what can a woman do when she is young, and hasn't been tried in the furnace of experience, so to speak? Fortunately, there were some kind people on hand who advised her to go to see the justice of the peace. The German recovered his freedom, your excellency, on condition that he spent two thousand roubles on a complimentary banquet. And after the dinner, when they all were pretty thoroughly drunk, they said to him, 'Here, you see! You scorned us! You wanted to see us all properly shaved and washed. No, *you must love us while we are dirty, for everyone will like us when we are clean.*"

The general burst into a roar of laughter, but a pained expression appeared on the girl's noble face.

"Ah, papa! I do not understand how you can laugh," said she. "These dishonourable deeds cause me sorrow and nothing else. When I see deception openly practised in the sight of all, when I see that the perpetrators are not punished by universal scorn, I do not know what takes place within me, but I become angry, and I think and think——" And here she suddenly burst into tears.

"Only please don't be angry with us," said the general; "we are not to blame in this matter, eh?" he went on, turning to Tchitchikoff. "Kiss me, my dear, and go to your room. I am about to dress for dinner. I hope," he added, looking Tchitchikoff in the face, "that you will stay to dine with me."

"If your excellency will only——"

"Stay without ceremony. I have plenty to offer you, thank God. There is some cabbage-soup."

With a deprecatory motion of the hands Tchitchikoff bent his head with respect and gratitude, so that all the objects in the room where hidden from his view for a moment, merely the tips of his boots remaining visible to him. When he raised his head once more, after remaining in this reverent attitude for a few moments, Ulinka was no longer visible. She had vanished. In her stead there stood before him a gigantic valet, with thick moustaches and whiskers, who was holding a silver washbasin and a towel in his hands.

"You will permit me to dress in your presence?" asked the general.

"Not only to dress in my presence, but to do anything which your excellency sees fit."

Pulling off his dressing-gown with one hand, and pulling up the sleeves of his shirt, the general began his ablutions, splashing and snorting like a duck. The soapy water flew about in all directions.

"How does it go?" said he, as he wiped his neck on all sides. "'You must love us while we are clean'——"

"Dirty, your excellency."

"Yes, 'while we are dirty, for everyone will love us when we are clean.' Very, very good! They love, they love, they actually love encouragement. Stroke, stroke them! Without encouragement, they won't steal, eh? Ha, ha, ha!"

Tchitchikoff was in indescribable spirits, and a fresh inspiration suddenly came to him. "The general is a jolly fellow, and a good-natured one. I'll try my dodge," thought he; and then perceiving that the valet had retired with the washbasin, he exclaimed, "Your excellency, since you are so kind and attentive to everyone, I have a great favour to ask of you."

"What is it?"

"I have an aged, invalid uncle, your excellency," said Tchitchikoff, glancing about him. "He has three hundred souls, and no heir except myself. He is not able to manage his estate himself, on account of his infirmities; and he will not allow me to manage it either. And he alleges a queer reason for this. 'I do not know my nephew,' says he. 'Perhaps he is a spendthrift. Let him prove to me that he is a trustworthy man: let him acquire three hundred souls for himself, and then I will give him my three hundred.'"

"Why, what does he mean? He's certainly a perfect fool," said the general.

"If he were only a fool, one might get along. But think of my position, your excellency. The old man has taken a housekeeper, and she has some children of her own. Before I know it, they will get hold of everything."

"The old fellow must have lost his senses," said the general. "Only I do not see how I can help you," he added, looking at Tchitchikoff in surprise.

"Well, this is what I have thought of. If your excellency would make over to me all the dead souls in your village, just as though they were alive, with a regular bill of sale, then I could show the bill of sale to the old man, and he would leave me his fortune."

Here the general burst into such a laugh as man can never have given vent to before. He flung himself into an arm-chair, threw his head back, and almost choked. The whole house was alarmed. The valet hurried in, and then came the daughter in affright.

"Father, what has happened to you?" she asked, in terror and amazement.

But it was a long while before the general uttered a sound. "It's nothing, my dear. Go to your own room. We will come to dinner directly. Be at ease. Ha, ha, ha!"

Then, after giving vent to several fresh sighs, the general's laughter burst forth with fresh violence, and re-echoed from the vestibule to the most remote room in the house.

Tchitchikoff felt disturbed.

"Uncle, uncle! how finely fooled you will be!" said the general. "Ha, ha, ha! To receive dead souls instead of live ones! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dear me, how ticklish his nerves are!" thought Tchitchikoff to himself.

"Ha, ha, ha!" went on the general. "What an ass! The idea of demanding such a thing! Let him make three hundred souls out of nothing in my presence, and then I'll give him three hundred souls of mine! He's an ass, of course!"

"Yes, your excellency, he's an ass."

"Well, that's a good trick of yours, to treat the old fellow to dead souls. Ha, ha, ha! I'd give, God knows what, to see

him when you present that bill of sale to him. But what is he What's he like? Is he very old?"

"Eighty years."

"But he moves about? He's alert? He must be pretty strong if that housekeeper lives with him."

"Strong, indeed! He's wasting away, grain by grain, your excellency."

"What a fool! Surely he is a fool!"

"He is, your excellency."

"But he goes out in society? Does he look alert? Can he support himself on his legs?"

"He can stand, but with difficulty."

"What a fool! But he is strong? Has he still his teeth?"

"Only two, your excellency."

"What an ass! Don't get angry, my friend. He's an ass, even if he is your uncle."

"He is an ass, your excellency, though he is my relative, and it is hard to acknowledge it. Still, what is to be done?"

Tchitchikoff lied: it was not hard to acknowledge, for the probabilities are that he had never had an uncle whatsover.

"As matters stand," he added, "if your excellency will be so kind as to grant me——"

"The dead souls? Oh! for such a trick I'd give them to you with land and houses too. Take the whole cemetery! Ha, ha, ha, ha! That old man! that old man! Ha, ha, ha, ha! How your uncle will be fooled! Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

And again the general's roars of laughter rang through the apartments.*

* The author appears to have left this portion of his story unfinished. From some rough notes which were found, however, after his death, it would seem that he here intended to describe how Tentyotnikoff was reconciled to his friend the general, to whom he soon paid a ceremonious visit at Tchitchikoff's suggestion. They had a conversation together respecting the generals of 1812, and eventually Tentyotnikoff asked for Ulinka's hand. Her father finally consented to a betrothal, and then determined to entrust our friend Tchitchikoff with the task of communicating this important news to the various members of the family. When the story is resumed in chapter xiv., the hero is seen on his way to the residence of one of the relatives, a certain Colonel Koshkareff, who is suffering from a peculiar form of monomania.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

WHICH DESCRIBES TWO VERY ECCENTRIC PERSONS

"IF Colonel Koshkareff really is a monomaniac, it would not be a bad thing to try my little dodge on him," said Tchitchikoff, on finding himself once more amid the open fields and the vast expanse, when everything had disappeared, and all that remained was the vault of heaven above and two clouds on one side.

"Selifan, did you make thorough inquiries as to the road to Colonel Koshkareff's?" he asked.

"If you will please to consider, Pavel Ivanovitch, I had no time to do so, for I was working at the calash; but Petrushka inquired of the coachman."

"What a fool! You have been told that no reliance is to be placed in Petrushka. Petrushka is a blockhead, Petrushka is a stupid, and Petrushka is certainly drunk now, to boot."

"There's surely no such difficulty about it," said Petrushka, turning half round, and looking out of the corner of his eye. "There's nothing more to do than to take to the fields after descending the hill."

"And you have taken nothing in your mouth excepting common brandy? Good, very good! One may say, he marvelled at the beauty of Europe." After this remark, Tchitchikoff stroked his chin, and asked himself, "What a difference there is, after all, between the physiognomy of a cultivated nobleman and that of a coarse lackey."

Meanwhile, the calash had begun to go down-hill. The fields, and the wide expanse dotted with maple-groves, opened out again. The comfortable equipage, rocking gently on its elastic springs, continued to descend the declivity, and at length, traversing the fields, it passed by a mill; then, over a bridge, with a light rumble; and finally with a little bound, over the soft, yielding surface of the lowlands. And not even a mound or a hillock was to be seen on either hand. Silence prevailed, not even a calash was in view.

The clumps of vines, the slender alders, and silvery poplars flew by, brushing Selifan and Petrushka, on the box, with their branches. They swept the latter's cap off every moment. The

surly servitor leapt from the box, cursed the stupid trees, and his master who had perched him up there, but he would neither fasten his cap nor even hold on to it with his hand, hoping that each time would be the last, and that the mishap would not occur again. Maples, birches, and pines were soon added to the list of trees. The forest grew darker, and seemed to be preparing to turn to the blackness of night. But all at once, from every quarter, gleams of light shone between the branches and tree-boles, like flashes from a mirror. The trees became more sparsely scattered, the gleams of light grew larger, and then, all at once, a lake lay before them—a watery expanse four versts in diameter.

High above the lake, on the opposite shore, lay scattered the grey timber cabins of a village. Shouts rang from the water. Twenty men, standing up to their waists, their shoulders, and their necks in the lake, were dragging a net to the opposite shore. An accident had happened. Along with the fish a man had become entangled—a man who, in height as in girth, was the exact counterpart of a water-melon, or a small cask. He was in a desperate condition, and was yelling at the top of his lungs, "Blockhead Denis, give it over to Kuzma! Kuzma, take the end from Denis! Don't bear on so, Big Foma! Go yonder, where little Foma is. You devils! you'll break the net, I tell you!"

This water-melon evidently had no fears for himself: he could not drown, owing to his corpulence; and tumble about as he would, with the object of diving, the water kept bringing him to the surface; even if two men had seated themselves on his back, he would have remained on the surface of the water with them like an obstinate bladder, merely grunting a little beneath their weight, and emitting bubbles through his nose. But he was very much afraid that his net would break and the fish he had caught escape him; and, therefore, several men, stationed on the bank with ropes, were dragging him in as well as the fish.

"This must be a gentleman; this must be Colonel Koshkareff," said Selifan.

"Why?" asked our hero.

"Because his body, as you will be pleased to observe, is whiter than other people's, and he is respectably corpulent, like a gentleman."

Meanwhile, the gentleman who was entangled in the net had been dragged considerably nearer to the shore. On feeling that he could touch the bottom with his feet, he did so, and at the same time he became aware of the calash descending to the dam, and of Tchitchikoff seated in it.

"Have you dined?" shouted the gentleman, stepping on to the bank, with the captured fish enveloped in the net, like a lady's hand incased in a transparent glove in summer-time. Then,

as he held one hand before his eyes like a visor, to shield them from the sun, and let the other one hang down—looking for all the world like the Venus de Medici emerging from the bath—he repeated his question in a loud voice.

"No, I haven't dined," answered Tchitchikoff, raising his cap, and continuing to bow from the calash.

"Well, thank God for that!"

"Why?" inquired Tchitchikoff, with curiosity, holding his cap above his head.

"Because!—fling that sturgeon also into the washtub, Little Foma! Go and help him, Kuzma." Two of the fishermen now lifted the head of some monster out of the tub. "See what a prince! he came in from the river!" added the stout gentleman. "Go to the manor-house. Coachman, take the road below, through the vegetable garden. Run, you stupid Big Foma, knock down the palings. He will guide you, and I'll be there directly."

Long-legged, barefooted Big Foma ran, just as he was, in his shirt alone, through the whole village, where drag-nets, fishing-baskets, and similar things hung over every cabin, for all the peasants were fishermen; then, he took down the palings of some vegetable garden, and through this garden the calash entered a square close to a wooden church. Farther on, behind the church, the roofs of the manorial buildings were visible.

"This Koshkareff is rather eccentric," said Tchitchikoff to himself.

"Here I am!" cried a voice on one side, whereupon our hero glanced round. The gentleman had already arrived beside him, clad in a grass-green nankeen surtout and yellow breeches; but his neck was devoid of a neckcloth, after the manner of Cupid's. He was seated sideways in a drozhky, the whole of which he took up by himself. Tchitchikoff tried to say something to him, but, behold, he had already disappeared. The drozhky again made its appearance at the spot where the fish had been drawn out, and again the fat man's voice rang out, "Big Foma and Little Foma! Kuzma and Denis!"

When Tchitchikoff arrived at the porch of the house, he was amazed to find the fat gentleman already there to receive him in his embrace. How he had managed to fly there was incomprehensible. They kissed each other, however, making a triple cross, after the ancient Russian custom. The gentleman belonged to the old school.

"I have brought you a greeting from his excellency," began Tchitchikoff.

"From what excellency?"

"From your relative, General Alexander Dmitrievitch."

"Who is this Alexander Dmitrievitch?"

"General Betrishtcheff," replied Tchitchikoff in some surprise.

"Don't know him."

Tchitchikoff was still more amazed.

"How is this? I hope, at least, that I have the pleasure of addressing Colonel Koshkareff?"

"No, don't hope it. Thank God that you have come not to him but to me, Piotr Petrovitch Pyetukh, Pyetukh Piotr Petrovitch," repeated the host.

Tchitchikoff was petrified. "How's this?" said he, turning to Selifan and Petrushka, both of whom dropped their jaws and stared with all their eyes, as one sat on the box and the other stood at the door of the calash. "How's this, you fools? You were told to go to Colonel Koshkareff's, and this is Piotr Petrovitch Pyetukh's?"

"You have behaved capitally, my children! Go to the kitchen: they will give each of you a measure of vodka there," said Piotr Petrovitch Pyetukh. "Unharness the horses, and go to the servants' quarters this instant!"

"I am meditating what I ought to do: such an unforeseen mistake," said Tchitchikoff.

"It's no mistake. First see what sort of a dinner we have, and then say whether it is a mistake. I most humbly beg of you to enter," added Pyetukh, taking Tchitchikoff by the arm, and leading him into the house. From the rooms there emerged to meet them two young fellows dressed in summer surtouts, and as slender as willow wands: they exceeded their father in height by a full arshin.

"My sons, students at the gymnasium, who have come home for the holidays. You can remain with our guest, Nikolasha; and you, Alexasha, come with me." So saying, the host disappeared.

Tchitchikoff devoted his attention to Nikolasha. The latter, it appeared, bade fair to be a good-for-nothing in the future. He told Tchitchikoff, the very first thing, that there was no advantage to be derived from studying at the provincial gymnasium; that he and his brother wanted to go to Petersburg, because the provinces were not fit to live in.

"I understand," thought Tchitchikoff: "the matter will end with the confectioners' shops and the boulevards. But how are matters?" he asked aloud: "in what condition is your papa's property?"

"Mortgaged," replied the papa himself, who was again in the drawing-room. "Mortgaged."

"That's bad," thought Tchitchikoff. "At this rate there will soon be no estate at all. I must make haste—but that was surely unnecessary," he said, with an air of regret. "You have been over-hasty in mortgaging it."

"No, not at all," said Pyetukh. "People say that it is profitable. Everybody mortgages his property now: how can one help following the example of others? Besides, I have always lived here: I am going to try to live in Moscow. Here are my sons

persuading me to do so; they long for the culture of the capital."

"What a fool this man is," thought Tchitchikoff: "he is squandering everything, and making spendthrifts of his sons. It's a snug little property. When you come to look at it, the peasants are well off, and he's not badly situated either. But when they become cultured yonder, in the restaurants and theatres, everything will go to the devil. This fisherman ought to live on his own property in the country."

"I am sure that I know what you are thinking of," said Pyetukh.

"What?" inquired Tchitchikoff, in some confusion.

"You are thinking, 'Fool, fool that this Pyetukh is! he has invited me to dinner, and as yet there's no dinner provided. Well, it will soon be ready, most respected sir. It will be ready before a girl with a shaved head has time to braid her hair."

"Daddy, here's Platon Mikhailovitch coming," said Alexasha, looking out of the window.

"Mounted on his brown horse," added Nikolasha, leaning over the sill.

"Where, where?" cried Pyetukh, approaching the window.

"Who is this Platon Mikhailovitch?" inquired Tchitchikoff of Alexasha.

"Our neighbour, Platon Mikhailovitch Platonoff, a very handsome man," answered Alexasha.

In the meantime, Platonoff himself had entered the room: he was a handsome fellow, with a fine figure and glossy light hair, which curled naturally. A heavy-jawed terror of a dog, by the name of Yarb, followed him, rattling his brass collar.

"Have you dined?" inquired the host.

"Yes."

"What have you come for then—to laugh at me? What can I do with you when you have dined?"

The visitor laughed, and replied, "I will console you by admitting that I ate nothing at dinner: I had no appetite at all."

"And we have had such a catch! If you could only have seen it! Such sturgeons! Such carp and *karasishtchi!*"*

"It's vexatious enough to hear you tell me about it. Why are you always so cheerful?"

"And why should one be bored, if you please?" asked the master of the house.

"Why be bored? Because things are tiresome."

"You eat too little; that's all. Try to make a good dinner. It's only lately that boredom was invented. Nobody used to get bored in former times."

"Well, enough of your boasting! Just as if you were never bored!"

"I never am. And upon my word there's no time to be bored.

* A fish resembling carp.

One wakes up in the morning, and there's the cook on the spot, and dinner must be ordered: then comes tea, and then the overseer, and then the fishing, and then dinner. After dinner, and before one has a chance to snore, there's the cook again, and supper must be ordered. How has one any time to feel bored?"

During the whole of this conversation, Tchitchikoff had been observing the new-comer, who had amazed him by his remarkably good looks, his slender, picturesque figure, the freshness, indeed, the feminine clearness of his complexion, which was not defaced by a single blemish. Neither passion nor grief, nor anything in the nature of emotion, had dared to lay a finger on his face, which was as pure as a young girl's, nor to imprint even a wrinkle upon it, although that might have given it a look of life, for it was a rather sleepy face in spite of the ironical smile which lighted it up at times.

"And I, permit me to remark," said Tchitchikoff, "am unable to understand how a man can mope when he has such a personal appearance as yours. Of course, if he lacks money, or has enemies—and there are people who are always ready to make attempts even on the life of a man."

"Believe me," interrupted the handsome man, "I should sometimes like a little anxiety, for the sake of variety. If some one would only put me in a passion! But there's no one to do so. It's a bore, and that's all there is about it."

"Then, you have not a sufficient amount of land in your estate, or the number of your serfs is small?"

"Not in the least. My brother and I have ten thousand *desyatins** of land between us, and over a thousand men peasants on them."

"Strange! I cannot understand it! But perhaps you have had some bad harvests, or epidemics, or some of your male serfs have died?"

"On the contrary, everything is in the best of order, and my brother is a capital manager."

"And to mope with all that! I don't understand it," said Tchitchikoff, shrugging his shoulders.

"We'll drive away his moping mood immediately," said the host. "Run, Alexasha, quick, to the kitchen, and tell the cook to send us some fish-patties as speedily as possible. And where's that jackanapes Yemelyan, and that thief Antoshka? Why don't they serve the *zakuska*?"†

But at this moment the door opened. The jackanapes Yemelyan and the thief Antoshka made their appearance with napkins, spread the table, and set on it a tray with six decanters, containing liquors of various colours. A necklace of plates, with all sorts of viands fit to arouse the appetite, soon surrounded the tray and decanters. The servants flitted hastily hither and thither, incessantly fetching something in covered dishes, inside

* Twenty-seven thousand acres. † Appetisers.

of which butter could be heard bubbling. The jackanapes Yemelyan and the thief Antoshka arranged things in excellent style. Their nicknames had merely been bestowed on them by way of encouragement. Their master was not at all fond of scolding, being a good-natured fellow; but the Russian man cannot get along without a spicy word now and then. It is as necessary to him as a glass of vodka is to his stomach, to aid digestion. How can it be helped? Such is his nature: he likes nothing that is sweet.

The *zakuska* was followed by the dinner. Now the kind-hearted host became a thorough brigand. No sooner did he spy a bit of food on anyone's fork than he immediately added another, saying, "Without a mate, neither man nor bird can live in this world." If anyone had two morsels, he heaped a third on to the top of them, declaring, "What sort of a number is two? God loves a trinity." If his guest had three, he said, "Where was there ever a telyéga seen with three wheels? Who builds a cabin with three corners?" As regards the fourth bit he was prepared with a proverb also, and likewise as regards the fifth. Tchitchikoff devoured nearly a dozen slices, and thought, "Well, the host won't pile up anything more." But in vain: without saying a word, his host laid on his plate some ribs of veal, with kidneys, from a most gigantic calf.

"I fed the animal for two years on milk," said the host: "I cared for him as though he had been my own son!"

"I cannot eat it," said Tchitchikoff.

"Try, and say *I cannot* afterwards."

"It won't go down. I have no room left."

"Well, there was no room in the church, as the story goes; but the chief of police arrived—and a place was found for him. There was such a throng that there was not room for an apple to fall. Only try: this morsel is the chief of police."

Tchitchikoff did try, and the morsel actually was something in the nature of a chief of police. A place was found for it, but it seemed as though nothing more could be put in.

"Now, how is such a man to go to Petersburg or Moscow! In three years, with such hospitality as this, he would utterly ruin himself," thought Tchitchikoff. Of course he was not aware that this had already been thoroughly accomplished, and that, even without being hospitable, a man may get rid of everything, not in three years, but even in three months.

It was the same with the wines. On receiving his money from the mortgage-bank, Piotr Petrovitch had provided himself with a store of wines for ten years to come. Consequently, he poured and poured. What the guests did not drink, he gave to Alexasha and Nikolasha, who clinked their glasses together like the rest. It was plain in advance to what branch of human learning they would direct their attention upon their arrival in the capital. The guests could hardly move. With great difficulty they dragged

themselves on to the balcony, and with greater difficulty disposed themselves in some arm-chairs. The host had no sooner seated himself in his, of a special square shape, than he fell asleep. His corpulent person becoming converted into a blacksmith's bellows, as it were, began, through his open mouth and nostrils, to emit such sounds as even a realistic writer could not describe. It was like a drum and a fife at play, combined with yet another sound resembling the bark of a dog.

"Eh, how he whistles!" said Platonoff.

Tchitchikoff began to laugh.

"Of course, if you dine like that, there's no chance of getting bored. Sleep follows, does it not?"

"Yes. But, nevertheless, I—you must excuse me—I cannot understand how it is possible for you to be bored. There are so many means to prevent oneself being bored."

"What are they?"

"Are there not plenty for a young man? Dancing, playing on some instrument, not to mention getting married."

"To whom?"

"Are there no rich, pretty girls in the neighbourhood, then?"

"Well, no."

"Well, then you can look elsewhere: you can travel." And a brilliant idea flashed through Tchitchikoff's brain. "Yes, that's a capital suggestion!" he said, looking Platonoff full in the eye.

"What?"

"Travelling."

"Where is one to go?"

"Why, if you are at liberty, come with me," said Tchitchikoff; and he thought, as he gazed at Platonoff, "That would be a fine thing. Then we might share the expenses, and the whole cost of repairing the trap might be carried to his account."

"But where are you going?"

"Just at present I am not travelling on my own affairs so much as on those of someone else. General Betrishtcheff, an intimate friend, and, I may say, a benefactor, has requested me to inform his relatives—in short, it's a family matter; but it is my own affair too, so to speak; and, say what you will, to see the world, to observe the manners of its people, is like a living book, a second education." While he spoke thus, Tchitchikoff was thinking to himself, "It really would be capital! I might charge all the expenses to him, and even travel with his horses, while mine are being fed in his village."

"Why shouldn't I travel?" Platonoff was thinking on his side in the meanwhile, "I have nothing to do at home; and the management of my affairs is in my brother's hands, so there would be no dissipation about it. Why not travel, in fact? Will you consent," he asked aloud, "to pass two days with my brother? Otherwise, he would not let me go."

"With the greatest pleasure; three even."

"Come, shake hands on it. We'll go," said Platonoff, brightening up.

He clapped his hands. "Let's be off!" he added.

"Where? where?" cried the host, waking up and staring at them. "No, my dear fellows. I have ordered a wheel to be removed from the calash; and your horse, Platon Mikhailovitch, has been driven fifteen versts away. No: you are going to pass the night here; and to-morrow, after an early dinner, you may go your way."

What was to be done with Pyetukh? They were forced to remain, and were rewarded with a beautiful spring evening. The host arranged a trip on the river. Twelve rowers and twenty-four oars, accompanied by songs, bore them over the surface of the mirror-like lake. From the lake they entered the river, which was immeasurably broad, with sloping banks on either side; and they passed, ever and anon, beneath ropes stretched from shore to shore, to assist in the fisheries. The waters were barely disturbed by the current; the changing views, as they succeeded one another, presented themselves in silence to the eyesight; and grove after grove refreshed one with an ever-varying commingling of trees.

The rowers, grasping their twenty-four oars simultaneously, suddenly elevated them in the air, and the boat floated along over the motionless, glassy surface, as lightly as a bird. The leader of the singers, a broad-shouldered youth, who sat third from the rudder, struck up the opening lines of a song in a clear, ringing voice, which seemed to issue from the throat of a nightingale. Five more caught up the refrain; the other six carried it on, and it poured forth in a melody as boundless as Russia herself. Even Pyetukh roused up, and began to hum, supporting the singers whenever the chorus lacked strength; and even Tchitchikoff felt sensible that he was a Russian. Platonoff alone thought, "What is there fine about that melancholy tune? It only makes one's soul still more depressed."

The shades of night had already fallen when they returned. The oars beat upon the water, which no longer reflected the heavens. In darkness they landed on the shore, where fires had been lighted, and here, on tripods, some fish-soup, made of freshly caught quivering chubs, was cooking. The village cattle and poultry had long since been driven home; the dust they had raised had settled again, and the herdsmen who had driven them stood at the gates waiting for their usual pot of milk and an invitation to partake of some of the fish-soup. Amid the darkness the subdued hum of men's voices and the yelping of dogs, resounding from some distant village, were audible. The moon rose, bent upon lighting up the darkened landscape, and finally everything was illuminated. Wondrous was the picture! But there was no one to admire it. Nikolasha and Alexasha

were dreaming of Moscow, of the restaurants and the theatres, about which a cadet who came from the capital had told them; their father was meditating how he might feed his guests; Platonoff was yawning. Tchitchikoff seemed to be the most animated of them all.

"Truly," thought he, "I will set up a little hamlet of my own someday. How can a man live anywhere except in the country?" And visions of a pretty wife and some small Tchitchikoffs began to present themselves to his fancy.

And at supper they again over-fed themselves. When Pavel Ivanovitch entered the apartment which had been prepared for him, and, throwing himself on the bed, felt his stomach, he said, "It's full, choke-full! No chief of police living could get into it!" As it happened, the study of the master of the house must needs be situated on the other side of the wall of our hero's room. The partition was thin, and every word which was spoken in the study was audible to Tchitchikoff, who now heard his host giving orders to the cook for an early breakfast on the morrow; and what orders they were! They would have given a corpse an appetite. First came a roar, "Now, roast it brown, and see that it is well basted!" And then the cook responded in a shrill falsetto, "I obey, sir! It shall be done, sir!"

"And you are to make a four-cornered fish-pasty," resumed the master, drawing in his breath with a sucking noise. "In one corner you must put the cheeks and the cartilage of the sturgeon, in another some buckwheat stuffing with onions and mushrooms, some garlic, sweet milk, brains, cocks' crests and crawfish, and—you know; arrange it so that it may be appetising."

"Yes, sir. I will do as you tell me."

"And let it be browned on one side, and lighter on the other. And bake it so that the crust may be all soaked with the contents, so that it may be—you know how, not crumbly, but likely to melt in your mouth." Thereupon Pyetukh smacked his lips, and wiped them.

"The deuce take it! He won't let me go to sleep," thought Tchitchikoff, as he wrapped the coverlet round his head, in order not to hear. However, through the coverlet now came the words—

"And round the sturgeon place some little stars of beetroot and mushrooms—you know, with horse-radish and turnips, carrots and beans, and some of that—what do you call it?—so that there may be as much garnishing as possible. And then let us have a pig's breast, well stuffed and with some nice crackling, and the sauce served apart.

And many other dishes besides did Pyetukh order, continually repeating, "And brown it, and roast it crisp, and see that it is well basted!" Tchitchikoff at last fell asleep while his host was giving some orders about a turkey.

The next day the guests overfed themselves to such an extent

that Platonoff could not ride. His stallion was sent back in charge of one of Pyetukh's grooms, and then he and Tchitchikoff seated themselves in the calash, whilst the thick-nosed dog, Yarb, followed them languidly. He, too, had overfed himself.

"This is too much. It does not do to overfeed one's self like this," said Tchitchikoff, when they had left the house behind them.

"And our friend thinks such a life the correct thing: that's the vexatious part of it," said Platonoff.

"Well, if I had an income of seventy thousand roubles a year like you," thought Tchitchikoff, "I wouldn't let myself be bored."

"Would you object to going to a village about ten versts from here?" inquired Platonoff. "I should like to take leave of my sister and my brother-in-law."

"With the greatest pleasure," said Tchitchikoff.

"If you are fond of learning any particulars about the management of an estate," said Platonoff, "you will take an interest in making my brother-in-law's acquaintance. You cannot find a better manager than he is. In the space of ten years, he has brought his property into such a fine state that he now receives an income of two hundred thousand roubles from it, instead of thirty thousand, as he did at first."

"Ah, he must evidently be a most estimable man! It will be extremely interesting to make his acquaintance. But how is this? That is to say, what is his family name?"

"Kostanzhoglo."

"And his baptismal name and patronymic?"

"Konstantin Feodorovitch."

"Konstantin Feodorovitch Kostanzhoglo! Indeed, it will be very interesting to make his acquaintance. It must be instructive to know such a man."

Platonoff took upon himself to guide Selifan, as was requisite, for the coachman could hardly hold himself on his box. As for Petrushka, he twice tumbled from the calash like a log, so that it became necessary to bind him to the seat with a rope. "What a brute!" was all that Tchitchikoff said.

"Look! Kostanzhoglo's land begins here," said Platonoff. "It has quite another aspect." And in fact, all over the fields planted with forest-trees, the young saplings were as even and as straight as arrows; behind them came another plantation of young trees, but a little taller; behind this rose a wood of older growth, and so on, the trees of each patch being taller than the preceding ones. Then came another strip of land, covered with a heavy growth of grain; and again, in the same manner, a young growth of forest, succeeded by an older one. As they passed under the arched branches, Platonoff exclaimed, "All these have grown up in eight or ten years; with anybody else they would not have grown in twelve."

"How does he manage it?" asked our hero.

"Oh, you must ask him. He's quite learned in all matters connected with the soil. He does nothing in vain. He not only understands the soil, but he knows what locality is required for each thing, and which tree should go with each grain. He makes everything answer three or four purposes at once. If he has a patch of forest, it is because, in addition to the forest as a forest, just so much extra moisture must be provided for the fields, with so much fertilising mould from the falling leaves, and so much shade. When there is a drought everywhere else, there is no drought with him: when the crops all round about him fail, they don't fail with him. It's a pity that I know so little about these things, that I cannot explain them fully to you; however, my brother-in-law resorts to such strange devices, he is called a sorcerer. You will see some very curious things on his estate. But it's a bore, all the same."

"He really must be a remarkable man," thought Tchitchikoff. "It is most lamentable that this young man cannot give me an idea of what he does. I feel very anxious to see him."

At length the village made its appearance. It resembled a town: a multitude of cabins were scattered about on three hillocks, crowned with churches, and everywhere hemmed in with ricks of hay, and stacks of grain. "Yes," thought Tchitchikoff, "it is evident that a man of importance lives here."

The cabins were all well built; the streets were level; whenever a telyéga appeared, it was stout and quite new; the moujiks whom one encountered had an intelligent expression; the horned cattle were of choice kinds; even the serfs' pigs looked like noblemen. It was evident that here dwelt peasants, who, as the song says, dug with silver spades. Here there were no English parks or lawns, arbours and bridges, with all sorts of devices: but, after the ancient fashion, an avenue lined with granaries and labourers' cottages ran almost up to the very manor-house, so that all that was going on round about might be under the master's eye. To complete the arrangement, a lofty tower of observation, which commanded a view for fifteen versts in every direction, rose upon the roof, not for the sake of ornament, but for the express purpose of overlooking the labourers in the distant fields. Under the porch they were met by some well-trained servants, very different indeed from the drunken Petrushka, and far more prepossessing, although they did not wear swallow-tailed coats, but simple cossack tunics of blue homespun.

The mistress of the house also ran out to the porch. She was as fresh as blood and milk, as beautiful as God's day, and as like Platonoff as one drop of water is like another; with this difference, however, that she was not at all languid, like he was, but merry and talkative.

"Welcome, brother! How glad I am that you have come!" she said. "Konstantin is not at home, but he will soon be here."

"Where is he?"

"He has business in the village with some traders," she replied, conducting the visitors into the house.

Tchitchikoff gazed with curiosity at the abode of this remarkable man, who possessed an income of two hundred thousand roubles, and he hoped that the aspect of the place would give him some inkling as to the owner's qualities. But it was impossible to draw any inferences. The rooms were simple, even bare: there were no frescoes, whatnots, or costly porcelain, or even books. In short, everything indicated that the owner did not spend much of his time within four walls; he plainly preferred being in his fields, and did not scheme in sybaritic fashion, before the fire, and in a comfortable arm-chair facing the chimney; his plans indeed entered his brain on the field of action; and upon being formed within him, were at once put into practice. The only signs of work which Tchitchikoff could perceive in the rooms were connected with housewifery. Upon the tables and chairs there lay some clean linden-wood planks, with the petals of flowers strewed upon them, drying.

"What rubbish have you spread out here, sister?" asked Platonoff.

"Rubbish indeed!" exclaimed the hostess. "This is the very best remedy for fever. We cured all the peasants with it last year. And that is for cordials, and that for preserves. You always laugh at my preserves and pickles, but when you taste them, you praise them highly."

Platonoff approached the piano, and began to turn over the music. "Heavens! how old-fashioned!" said he. "Come, now, are not you ashamed of yourself, sister?"

"Really, you must forgive me, brother. I have had no time to devote to music for a long while past. I have a little daughter, eight years old, whom I must educate. Must I consign her to the hands of a foreign governess simply for the sake of obtaining time to devote myself to music? No: you must excuse me, brother; that is something which I shall not do."

"How tiresome you have grown, sister," said the brother, as he walked to the window. "Ah! here he is! He's coming! he's coming!" exclaimed Platonoff.

Tchitchikoff also hastened to the window. A man of forty, sunburnt and alert, was approaching the porch. He wore a knitted cap and a camel's-hair surtout. Evidently he paid no heed to his attire. Two men of the lower classes were walking beside him, cap in hand, engaged in discussing something with him. One of them was a simple peasant, the other some sort of itinerant wholesale trader and adventurer, wearing a blue *sibirka*.* As they all came to a halt near the porch, their conversation became audible inside the house.

"This is what you had better do," said Kostanzhoglo—

* A long coat without any opening behind.

"purchase your liberty from your master. I will lend you the money to do so if you like. You can work it out with me afterwards."

"No: why purchase our freedom? You take us rather. Everyone learns sense from you. The difficulty now is, that we can't take care of ourselves. The distillers supply such liquors that one glass makes a fellow's stomach ache as though he had drunk a pailful. Before one succeeds in recovering one's senses, one has squandered everything. There are so many snares set for poor people nowadays. The Evil One, who rules the world—by Heavens!—has so arranged matters that everything throws a man off the track. People have begun to make tobacco, and all sorts of things. But what is to be done, Konstantin Feodorovitch? A man is a man in the sight of God: you can't deny that."

"Listen: the point lies in this. You will not have full freedom, even with me. It is true that you will receive everything at the start, including a cow and a horse; but the point of the matter is, that my demands on the peasant are greater than they are anywhere else. With me, work is the first consideration. I do not allow idleness either in myself or in anyone else. I work like an ox, and I make my peasants work. All sorts of rubbish get into a man's head through lack of work. So just you fellows consider this at the *mir*,* and discuss it among yourselves."

"We have already discussed it, Konstantin Feodorovitch. The elders have already expressed their minds. 'Ah!' they say, 'every one of Konstantin's peasants is rich. And your priests are so compassionate, whereas ours don't attend to their duties; indeed no one can be buried properly.'"

"All the same, go and talk it over."

"I obey you, Konstantin Feodorovitch."

"Do me the favour to reduce your price, Konstantin Feodorovitch," now said the itinerant dealer in the blue *sibirka*, who was walking on the landowner's other side.

"I have already given you my answer. I am not fond of chaffering. I am not like the other landowners, whom you can beggar because of the pressure of their debts. I know you all, you see. You keep lists of all those who are in debt. What is there to be surprised at in that? A man who is reduced to extremities sells you goods at half-price. But what is your money to me? My things can wait three years if necessary. I have no payments to make to the Advance Bank."

"That's true, Konstantin Feodorovitch. And it is simply because I wish to have some dealings with you, and not from any motives of greed, that I ask you this. But please accept three thousand roubles as earnest-money." The sharper thereupon pulled a bundle of dirty bank-notes from his bosom.

* The communal council of village elders.

Kostanzhoglo took them with the greatest coolness, and thrust them into the rear pocket of his surtout.

"H'm!" thought Tchitchikoff: "just as though the packet were a pocket-handkerchief!"

Kostanzhoglo now made his appearance at the door of the drawing-room. Tchitchikoff was struck by the bronzed hue of his face, the stiffness of his dark hair, which here and there was turning grey prematurely, by the alert expression of his eyes, and by a certain bilious stamp of fiery Southern origin. Kostanzhoglo himself did not know whence his forefathers had come. He did not trouble himself about his genealogy, however, deeming it a matter of no importance, superfluous as regards domestic management. He was not of pure Russian origin, that is certain, as his features proved the contrary; however, he was thoroughly convinced that he was a Muscovite, and he was acquainted with no other tongue than Russian.

Platonoff introduced Tchitchikoff to him, and they kissed each other, according to custom.

"To cure myself of hypochondria, Konstantin, I have hit upon the plan of travelling through the different provinces," said Platonoff; "and Pavel Ivanovitch here, has proposed that I should accompany him, in order to get rid of my low spirits."

"Very good," said Kostanzhoglo. "What localities do you propose to visit?" he added, turning to Tchitchikoff.

"I must confess," answered Tchitchikoff, inclining his head courteously on one side, and at the same time caressing the arm of his chair, "I must confess that just at present I am travelling not so much on my own account as on the business of someone else. General Betrishtcheff, my intimate friend, and I may say, my benefactor, has asked me to communicate with his relatives. There are several of them to be seen; but on the other hand, I am also travelling on my own account, so to speak: for, not to mention the advantage which is to be derived from travelling as regards health, I like to view the world, and study the habits of the people. Travel forms a living book, a science in itself, so to speak."

"Yes, it does not do anyone harm to take a peep at various quarters."

"That remark is capitally put: yes, as a matter of fact, it does no harm. You see things which you would not have otherwise seen: you meet people whom you would not have met. Conversation with some of them is worth its weight in gold. Here now, for example, a case presents itself. I appeal to you, most respected Konstantin Feodorovitch! teach me, instruct me, slake my thirst for knowledge of the truth! I await your sweet words, as I might await manna!"

"But with what object? In what should I instruct you?" asked Kostanzhoglo in confusion. "I got my own poor education at very small cost."

"Your wisdom, wisdom, most respected sir—the wisdom needful to manage a country estate; the wisdom to extract an assured income from it; to acquire not imaginary but real property, thus fulfilling all the duties of a citizen, and winning the reverence of one's fellow-countrymen."

"Well, do you know what?" said Kostanzhoglo, gazing thoughtfully at our hero. "Remain a day with me. I will show you all the arrangements, and tell you all about everything. You will see that there is no wisdom about it."

"Yes, do stay," said Mrs. Kostanzhoglo; and turning to her brother, she added, "Stay, brother: what need is there for you to hurry away?"

"It's all the same to me. How shall it be, Pavel Ivanovitch?"

"I accept, with the greatest pleasure. But here is the difficulty: I must call upon a relative of General Betrishtcheff's, a certain Colonel Koshkareff."

"Why, he's a lunatic!"

"Yes, he is demented. I know that. And of my own accord I would not go to see him, but General Betrishtcheff, my intimate friend and benefactor, so to speak, wants me to do so."

"In that case, do you know what you had better do?" said Kostanzhoglo. It's not ten versts to his place. My carriage is standing harnessed. Go and see him immediately. You will be able to get back here in time for tea."

"An excellent idea!" exclaimed Tchitchikoff, seizing his hat.

The host's *prolyotka** was brought to the door, and in half an hour it had borne him to the colonel's village. The whole place was in disorder: buildings in process of construction and of reconstruction, heaps of refuse, bricks and lumber, encumbered all the streets. The houses looked like courts of justice. On one was the inscription, Depot of Agricultural Implements, in gilt letters; on another, Chief Office for Accounts; farther on, Committee of Rural Affairs; and again, School for the Higher Education of the Peasantry. In short, the deuce only knows what was not there.

Our hero found the colonel at a desk in the office for accounts, with a pen between his teeth. Koshkareff received him with special affability. Judging from appearances, he was an extremely amiable and very approachable man; he began to tell our hero of the great labour it had cost him to bring his estate to its present flourishing condition. He complained bitterly of the difficulty of making the moujik understand that there are such things as luxury, art, and skill; that up to that time had not been able to make the women wear corsets, whereas in Germany, where he had spent some time with his regiment in the year '14, even a miller's daughter he knew had been able to play upon the piano. However, in spite of all the opposition of the party of ignorance, he still hoped to attain his object, and so enlighten

* A variety of drozhky, of circular shape.

the peasantry of his village, that they would be seen reading a book on lightning conductors, or the *Georgics* of Virgil, or making a chemical analysis of the soil, as they followed the plough.

"Dear me, did anyone ever hear of such a thing!" thought Tchitchikoff. "Why to this day, I have not even read *The Duchess of La Vallière* through! I never have any time."

The colonel had a great deal more to say about promoting the welfare of the people. Costume possessed great significance with him. He offered to wager his own head that if only one half of the Russian peasantry could be induced to don German trousers, the sciences would progress, trade would flourish, and gold remain permanently in Russia.

Tchitchikoff listened and listened, looking the colonel steadily in the eye the while, and he finally said to himself, "Evidently enough, there's no need to stand on ceremony with this man." Thereupon, he immediately stated that he wished to buy some serfs, obtain the necessary deeds of sale, and fulfil all the formalities.

"So far as I can judge by your words," said the colonel, in a good deal of confusion, "this is a request you present, is it not?"

"Exactly so."

"In that case, put it in writing. It will go to the commission for the reception of reports, which after having passed opinion upon it, will send it to me. From me it will go to the committee of rural affairs. Thence, after sundry amendments, it will pass to the superintendent. The superintendent will then communicate with my secretary."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Tchitchikoff. "God knows how long it will take to transact the business in writing! You see, the souls I want are—after a fashion—dead."

"Very good. Then write that the souls are, after a fashion, dead."

"But how can dead souls be written down? It is impossible to inscribe them like that, for although they are dead, it must appear as though they were alive."

"Good. Then write, 'but it is necessary, or it is requisite, it is desirable, it is demanded,' in fact, anything you like, 'that they shall appear as though alive.' This cannot be transacted in any other way than by writing. England, and even Napoleon has set the example. I will detail a commissioner, who will conduct you to all the departments."

He touched a bell. A man, the secretary, made his appearance.

"Send me a commissioner!" The commissioner, something between a peasant and an official, also appeared. "This man here will conduct you to all these indispensable places." So said the colonel.

Tchitchikoff decided to accompany the commissioner and inspect the indispensable departments out of curiosity. The department for the reception of reports existed as yet only upon

the sign-board, and the doors were locked. The head of affairs here had been transferred to the newly instituted committee of rural building. His place had at first been supplied by the colonel's valet, named Berezovsky; who also had since been ordered off to the committee on construction. They knocked at the department of rural affairs—and there things were undergoing re-arrangement; however, finally they routed out a drunken man, but got no satisfaction from him. "Everything is in a nonsensical state here," remarked the commissioner to Tchitchikoff, at last. "The master is being led by the nose. The building commission rules everything: it tears everybody from his business, and sends him wherever it sees fit. And the only profit in the whole affair is derived by the commission." This fellow was evidently displeased with the commission.

When Tchitchikoff glanced around him, he saw building going on everywhere. He did not care to push his inspection farther. On his return, he told the colonel that things were in a bad way, that there was nothing but confusion in the place, that it was impossible to make head or tail of it, and that there was no commission for the reception of reports at all, simply a desperate set of thieves.

The colonel boiled over with righteous indignation, pressing Tchitchikoff's hand warmly in token of his gratitude. Then, immediately snatching up pen and paper, he wrote down eight questions of the most searching nature: On what ground had the building commission disposed, in this high-handed manner, of officials who were not subject to its authority? How could the director-in-chief permit the superintendent of works to set out on an investigation without having first resigned his post? And how could the committee of rural affairs view with indifference the fact that the commission for the reception of reports and petitions was not in existence at all?

"Now there's going to be a storm!" thought Tchitchikoff, and he tried to take his leave.

"No, I will not let you go," said the colonel. "My personal pride is touched. I will show you what a regular, organised course of management is like. I will intrust your business to a man who is worth all the rest put together. He has completed a university education. That's the sort of serfs that I have! So as not to waste any valuable time, I beg that you will take a seat in my library," added the colonel, opening a side door. "You will find books, paper, pens, pencils, and everything you may require there. Make use of them, make use of them all; you are the master here. Culture should be free to all."

Thus spoke Koshkareff, as he conducted Tchitchikoff into the library. This was a vast hall, lined from top to bottom with books. There were even some stuffed animals. The books pertained to all branches of learning: to forestry, the rearing of cattle and swine, horticulture, and so on; and there were special

journals on every subject, such as are disseminated among subscribers, but which no one ever reads. Perceiving that none of these books were adapted for passing the time, Tchitchikoff turned to another case. This was jumping from the frying-pan into the fire. All these were philosophical works. Six huge tomes presented themselves to his eyes, with the title, "Preliminary Introduction to the Domain of Thought; or, The Theory of Universality, Correlation, and Essentiality, in its Application to the Conception of the Organic Origin of the Reciprocal Partition of Universal Productiveness." Turn the book over as Tchitchikoff would, on every page there occurred such words as "phenomenon," "development," "abstract," "isolation," and "conjunction," and the deuce knows what besides.

"This is beyond me!" said our hero, and he turned to a third book-case, where all the volumes belonged to the department of art. Thence he drew out a bulky tome, with some immodest mythological pictures, and began to look them over. That style of picture pleases bachelors of middle age, and sometimes even hoary old men, who run after ballet-dancers and other like spices. Having finished the inspection of this book, Tchitchikoff was on the point of pulling down another of the same description, when Colonel Koshkareff made his appearance with a beaming countenance and a document in his hand.

"It's all done, and capitally done! The man of whom I spoke to you is a positive genius. For this I shall place him over them all, and I shall establish an entire department for him alone. See what a clear head he has, and how he has settled everything in a few minutes."

"Now, glory to thee, O Lord!" thought Tchitchikoff, and he prepared to listen.

The colonel on his side began to read:—

"'Entering upon the consideration of the commission intrusted to me by your worship, I have the honour to report on it, as follows:—

"'First. The petition itself of the collegiate councillor and cavalier, Pavel Ivanovitch Tchitchikoff, contains a misconception; for the souls he speaks of are styled dead through an oversight. By this designation he has probably been graciously pleased to indicate those who are near to death, but not dead. And this very designation bears witness to an empirical education, obtained, in all probability, in a parish school; for the human soul is deathless.'

"He's a sharp fellow," said Colonel Koshkareff, with satisfaction. "He has pricked you a little there. But confess, he wields a clever pen!

"'In the second place, there are no unmortgaged souls, either among those on the verge of death, or of any other sort, on the estate; for they all are not only mortgaged a first time,

without exception, but re-mortgaged, to the amount of one hundred and fifty roubles a soul. Moreover, as regards the small hamlet of Gurmailovka, the situation there is by no means clear, on account of a lawsuit now being carried on with the landowner, Predishtcheff, notice of which was duly published in *The Moscow Gazette*, of the present year, number forty-two.'"

"Then why did not you tell me so in the first place? Why have you detained me with your nonsense?" inquired Tchitchikoff angrily.

"Really, now! Why, it was necessary that you should be made aware of all this in writing. A fool can perceive a thing unintelligently, but it must be seen intelligently."

Tchitchikoff snatched up his cap in a rage, and ran out of the house, against all decorum. His coachman was standing with the carriage in readiness, for he knew that he must not unharness the horses, as a written petition would have had to be presented for fodder, and an order to serve out the oats would only have been issued on the following day. Nevertheless, the colonel ran out to accompany our hero to his carriage. He even shook his hand warmly, pressed it to his heart, and thanked him for having afforded him an opportunity of seeing how his organisation operated. He said that matters must be spurred up and kept in motion, for everything was apt to become drowsy, and the springs of an administration might grow rusty and weak. In fact, owing to this incident, a happy thought had occurred to him: to institute a commission which should be entitled the commission of scrutiny with power over the building commission, so that then no one would dare to steal anything in future.

Tchitchikoff went away feeling angry and dissatisfied, and he reached Kostanzhoglo's house at a late hour, when the candles had already been lighted.

"What has detained you so late?" asked the host when he made his appearance at the doorway.

"Yes, what have you been discussing at such length with the colonel?" inquired Platonoff.

"I have never beheld such a fool since I was born!" said Tchitchikoff.

"That's nothing," remarked Kostanzhoglo. "Koshkareff is a consoling phenomenon. He is useful, because in him one sees reflected, in a grotesque and very striking manner, the follies of those wiseacres, who, without knowing anything themselves, pretend to direct the world. He has set up offices and factories and schools; and the deuce knows what he hasn't established! No sooner have he and his fellows recovered from the effects of the French invasion of the year '12, than they must needs completely ruin themselves again. In fact, they have ruined themselves worse than the French ever ruined them; and thus it happens that a certain Piotr Petrovitch Pyetukh is regarded as a fine example of a landed proprietor."

"Well, his property is now pledged to the Advance Bank," aid Tchitchikoff.

"Just so! Everything is mortgaged, everything will go to he bank." Having spoken thus, Kostanzhoglo began to rage little. "There's Shlyapkin, too, who has set up a candle-factory; e has imported workmen from London, and has become a lealer in candles! A respectable business, truly, for a land-)wner! He also visits manufacturers and factory owners, nd he sets up spinning machines, and makes calico for the ussies and the women of the town."

"But you have factories yourself," remarked Tchitchikoff.

"And who established them? They established themselves. The wool accumulated: there was no way of getting it off my ands, and I began to weave cloth, coarse cloth, merely suited o moujiks, my moujiks. However, some of it is purchased rom me at the fairs because of its cheapness. For six years in uccession, too, the fishermen piled up fish-scales on my shores. And what was to be done with them? So I began to boil them down into glue, and I have made forty thousand roubles out of hem. And that's the way everything goes with me."

"What a devil of a fellow!" thought Tchitchikoff, staring at his host, with all his eyes. "What claws he has for raking in noney!"

"And then, I have undertaken these things from another notive. I have drawn together a number of labourers, who would otherwise have died of hunger. It is a famine year, and ll through the fault of the manufacturers who neglected to sow rops. Many factories have accumulated on my hands, my riend. A new one springs up every year, simply because scraps nd refuse of some kind or other have accumulated. Only consider domestic economy attentively. Every sort of rubbish will yield a revenue."

"This is astounding! So rubbish yields a revenue," said Tchitchikoff.

However, Kostanzhoglo now broke into a bitter speech about what he called the Don Quixotism of the Russian character, nd Tchitchikoff, who wanted to catechise his host in detail as o the manner in which every sort of rubbish could be made to produce a revenue, had no chance to interpolate a word.

"People imagine," said the host, "that they are enlightening he peasant. Just make him rich first, and a good manager, nd the rest will be his business. But nowadays everybody is nore stupid that it is possible for one to conceive. Just see what these scribblers write now! They put forth some little book, and all men dart upon it. And this is what they say: 'The peasant leads a very simple, a too simple, drowsy life. He must be made acquainted with articles of luxury: he must be nade to feel the need of a higher civilisation.' They themselves, hanks to this luxury, have become rags, and not men, contracting

the deuce knows what diseases. There is no longer a little boy of eighteen who has not already tried everything; he has no teeth left him, and he's as bald as a bladder. So now they want to infect the peasants also. But, thank God! there is one healthy class still left among us which has not been initiated into all the vices. For this we simply owe thanks to God. The agriculturist is the most honourable man among us. Why do we meddle with him? Would to God that all men were like the husbandman."

"So you assume that agriculture is the most profitable calling to which a man can devote himself?" inquired Tchitchikoff.

"It is the most legitimate, but not the most profitable. 'Thou shalt till the earth in the sweat of thy brow,' it has been said. There's nothing surprising about that. It has already been proved, by the experience of ages, that man is more moral, purer, nobler, more lofty, when engaged in the profession of agriculture. I do not say, refrain from engaging in anything else, but let agriculture lie at the foundation—that's all. Factories will arise of themselves, and factories of a legitimate sort, just what is needed here, under the hand of a man who is himself on the spot. Not the sort of factories where all manner of vile means are resorted to, and the wretched populace is demoralised and depraved. Say what you like about luxuries, I shall not establish on my estate any of those things which create a demand for tobacco or sugar, for instance. If vice must enter the world, it shan't be through my instrumentality. I will be righteous in the sight of God. I have been living among the people for twelve years, and I know what's what."

"The most wonderful thing to me is your statement, that by judicious management profit may be derived from scraps and remnants, and that every sort of refuse will give an income," said Tchitchikoff. "For instance, if I became a landed proprietor, and wanted to enrich myself in a brief space of time, so that I might fulfil the highest duties of a citizen, in what manner should I set about it?"

"How ought you to proceed, in order to become wealthy?" replied Kostanzhoglo. "Ah, that's the point!"

"Come, let us go to supper!" said the hostess, rising from the sofa, and stepping into the middle of the room, where she wrapped her shivering limbs in a shawl.

Tchitchikoff sprang from his chair with almost the same agility that a military man would have shown, flew to the hostess with the suave expression of a delicate statesman on his countenance, offered her his arm with a flourish, and escorted her through two apartments to the dining-room, where the soup-tureen was already standing on the table, with its cover off, and exhaling an agreeable odour of fresh herbs and spring vegetables. They all seated themselves at table. The servants quickly placed all the courses on the table, in covered dishes, together with every-

thing that was necessary, and then quitted the room. Kostanzhoglo did not like to have the servants listen to the conversation of their superiors, and still less to have them stare at him while he was engaged in eating.

"You were speaking of becoming a landowner," he said at last, addressing our hero. "Well, there is the estate of my neighbour, Khlobuyoff, for sale. Why don't you buy it? It is a splendid chance; and I would pay him forty thousand roubles for it on the spot, if he demanded that sum."

"H'm!" said Tchitchikoff, and he fell into thought. "But why," he at last inquired, with some hesitation, "why do you not purchase it yourself?"

"One must know how to draw the line somewhere. I have a great many worries connected with my present estate, without assuming any more responsibilities. Moreover, the noblemen of the district are crying out against me, asserting that I have taken advantage of their need and bankrupt condition—indeed, that I am buying up all the land for a song, and so I have grown tired of it all."

"How inclined people are to evil speaking!" said Tchitchikoff.

"Particularly in our province: it is something you can't conceive. They never mention me otherwise than as a niggard and a miser of the first water. They make excuses for themselves on every point. 'I certainly have been a spendthrift,' one of them will say; 'but that was because I lived in accordance with the higher requirements of life, and encouraged tradesmen, that is to say, rascals. Of course, I might have lived like a hog, as that Kostanzhoglo does'."

"I should like to be such a hog!" said Tchitchikoff.

"And all that is so much falsehood and nonsense. The higher requirements, forsooth! Why are they so lauded? These fellows buy books, indeed, but then they don't read them. The matter ends in cards and champagne. And all this comes of my not giving them dinners, and lending them money. I don't give them dinners, simply because it would bore me to entertain them: I am not accustomed to parties. But if any one will come and eat what I eat myself—take pot-luck with me, as the saying goes—I am very glad to have him. I don't lend money! What nonsense. Come to me in a case of absolute need, and tell me the circumstances, and how you propose to use my money; if I see from your words, that you will employ it sensibly, and that the money will clearly be of advantage to you, I won't refuse; I won't even ask you for interest."

"This must be taken into consideration," thought Tchitchikoff.

"And I seldom, if ever, refuse," proceeded Kostanzhoglo. "But fling my money to the winds, I won't. You must excuse my not doing that. Deuce take the man who does it! He will spend his cash on dinners for his mistress, or he will furnish his house in a mad style, or he will get up some sort of a jubilee

in memory of the fact that he has lived his life in vain. There's no use in lending such a man money!"

Here Kostanzhoglo spat, and came near uttering some violent and indelicate words in the presence of his wife. The gloomy tint of hypochondria darkened his countenance. Vertical and horizontal wrinkles, the witnesses of the wrathful movement of his spleen which had been so excited, collected on his brow.

"Permit me, honoured sir, to again recall you to the subject of our interrupted conversation," said Tchitchikoff, drinking another glass of wine. "Suppose, for instance, that I were to acquire the property which you were so good as to mention; then how much time would be required for me to become sufficiently wealthy to——"

"If you wish," interrupted Kostanzhoglo gruffly and abruptly, being still in an irritated frame of mind, "if you wish to grow rich in a short space of time, you will never become wealthy, at all; but if you wish to enrich yourself, without concerning yourself as to the time required, you can speedily become rich. Yes," went on Kostanzhoglo, still abruptly, as though he were personally incensed with Tchitchikoff, "it is necessary to feel a love for work: without that, nothing can be accomplished. You must love the management of your estate. And, believe me, it is not at all wearisome. People have invented a fiction to the effect that it is dull in the country. I should die of dullness if I were to pass a single day in the city, as people do pass their days there, in those stupid clubs and inns and theatres. Fools! idiots! asses they are! The manager of an estate has no time to be dull. Look at the yearly round of work. See how, even before the advent of spring, everything is already on the watch; there is the preparation of the seeds, the sorting, the measuring of the grain in the barns, and the drying. Everything is scanned beforehand, and everything reckoned up. And when the ice breaks up, and the streams pour down, and the earth warms up, then the spade does its work in vegetable garden and orchard, and the plough and harrow perform theirs in the fields; and then come planting and sowing. Well, the future harvest is sown, the blessing of the world is sown, the food of millions is sown! And then follows the haymaking. And then summer has arrived. All at once the reaping is in full swing: the wheat has come up after the rye, and next the barley and the oats. Everything is seething; it is impossible to lose a minute. If you had twenty eyes, there would be work for all of them. And when everything is done—the grain carried to the threshing floor, and stored in the granaries—then begins the autumn ploughing of the stubble, the preparing of the storehouses for the winter, the ricks and the cattle-pens to see to, and at the same time, all the women's work. And then in the winter, the threshing and the removal of the grain to the granaries; the felling and sawing of the trees in the forest; the conveyance of bricks and timber for building

operations in the spring. You go to the mill, you go to the factory, you go to inspect the workmen's quarters, you go to the peasants' cabins to see how they are getting on there. Yes, for my part, if a carpenter handles his axe well, I am ready to stand and watch him for two hours, such a cheering effect does work produce upon me. But if you can also see with what object all this is being done, how everything about you is multiplying and increasing, bearing increase and income—well, I cannot express what takes place in your spirit then. And it is not because your money is increasing—money is nothing in itself—but because all this is the work of your own hands, because you see that you are the source of it all; that you are the creator, and that from you, as from some magician, good and abundance are showered upon all. Now, where else will you find me such another enjoyment?" said Kostanzhoglo; and, as he raised his face, the wrinkles disappeared from it. He was radiant, like an emperor on the day of his solemn coronation, and flashes of light seemed to radiate from his countenance. "Yes, in the whole world, you will not find any other such pleasure. Just in this does man imitate God. God prescribed to himself the task of creation as the loftiest of all enjoyments. And he demands the same thing from man, in order that man, like his Creator, may distribute happiness around him. And yet this is called a tiresome task!"

Tchitchikoff listened to his host's melodious speech as to the song of heavenly birds. His mouth watered. His very eyes grew moist, and expressed beatitude.

"Konstantin, it is time to go," said the mistress of the house, rising from the table. They all rose up. Tchitchikoff offered his arm with a flourish, and conducted his hostess back to the drawing-room; but his movements now lacked their former agility, for his thoughts were now all bent on practical matters.

"You may say what you like, a country life is tiresome all the same," said Platonoff, as he walked behind them.

"My guest isn't a stupid man," meanwhile thought the host. "He is attentive, and cautious of speech."

When they had all settled themselves in a comfortable little room opposite a balcony, with a glass door leading into the garden, and had gazed dreamily at the stars shining above the crests of the trees in the sleeping garden, Tchitchikoff experienced an agreeable sensation, such as he had not felt for a long time, exactly as though his native roof had at length, after his prolonged wanderings, received him once more, and as if, to crown all, he had accomplished everything which he had desired, and had cast aside his pilgrim's staff, saying, Enough! Such wonderful effect had his host's discourse produced upon him.

That night when he went to bed he did not sleep. His thoughts kept him awake. He was meditating how he might become the owner, not of a fanciful, but of a real, estate. If he could only

mortgage those dead souls, and acquire some property which was not in cloudland! He already beheld himself actively engaged in directing things, just as Kostanzhoglo had instructed him—swiftly, and yet cautiously, watching everything with his own eyes, making himself personally acquainted with all the peasants, devoting himself solely to labour and to the management of affairs. He tasted, in anticipation, the pleasure which he would experience when he had instituted strict order, and when all the springs of the domestic machine were acting vigorously, propelling one another. Work pressed; and just as flour is rapidly ground from the grain in a mill, so cash, hard cash, was being continually extracted from all sorts of scraps and refuse. His host was the first man in all Russia for whom he had experienced a personal respect. So far, he had respected a man either for his high official rank or for his possessions. Never yet had he respected any man for his mind alone. Kostanzhoglo was the first, and our hero understood that he could not play any tricks on him. Another project, moreover, engrossed his thoughts—that of purchasing Khlobuyoff's estate. He had ten thousand roubles of his own, and he thought of trying to borrow fifteen thousand from Kostanzhoglo, since the latter had already declared that he was ready to assist any man who was desirous of becoming wealthy. The rest he might require must be obtained in some other way, either by mortgage or simply by making Khlobuyoff wait. That was possible, too, surely. And he pondered upon the subject for a long time. At length Morpheus, who had held all the household in his embrace for fully four hours already, clasped Tchitchikoff also to his bosom. He fell into a sound sleep and began to snore.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

LUXURY AND INDIGENCE

ON the following day everything was arranged in the best possible manner. Kostanzhoglo gladly lent our hero ten thousand roubles, without interest or security—on his simple note of hand: so ready, indeed, was he to assist anyone on the road to wealth. He showed Tchitchikoff all over his establishment. With him, not a single moment was lost; nothing ran to waste; not the slightest irregularity took place among his villagers. There was not a sluggard anywhere. Intelligence and contentment beamed upon the faces of his peasants. Everything was so simply and sensibly arranged that it worked itself. The alternations of forest and tilled land could not fail to astonish Tchitchikoff. How much this man had accomplished, without making any noise in the world, without composing projects or treatises about the manner of insuring the well-being of all mankind! And how useless is the life of the man who dwells in towns, who frequents taverns and dances over polished floors! At this thought Tchitchikoff's desire to become a landowner grew stronger than ever.

Kostanzhoglo himself offered to accompany our hero to Khlobuyoff's in order to inspect the estate with him. Tchitchikoff was in fine spirits. After a hearty breakfast, they set out, all three, including Platonoff, riding in Pavel Ivanovitch's calash; the host's empty prolyotka* followed them. The dog, Yarb, ran on in front, chasing the birds from the road. Kostanzhoglo's forests and tilled fields stretched for fifteen versts on both sides of the highway. As soon as their limit was reached, everything assumed a very different aspect: the grain was sickly, and stumps took the place of trees. Khlobuyoff's little village seemed deserted, in spite of its fine situation. The new stone mansion, which had remained in an unfinished state and uninhabited for several years, stood out most prominently of all; and behind it was the little old manor-house, which was still used as a residence. They found the master of the place unkempt and yawning, having but just awoke. He was forty years of age; his neckerchief was knotted on one side; there was a patch on his surtout, and there were holes in his shoes.

* A circular drozhky.

God knows what his delight at seeing his visitors was: it was as though he had beheld some brothers, from whom he had been separated for a very long time.

"Konstantin Feodorovitch! Platon Mikhailovitch! You have honoured me with a visit!" he exclaimed. "Let me rub my eyes. I really thought that no one was ever coming to see me again. Everybody flies from me, as from the plague: they think that I want to try to borrow money from them. Oh, it's hard, hard, Konstantin Feodorovitch! I see that I alone am to blame. But what am I to do? The pig has earned his pig's fate. Excuse me, gentlemen, for receiving you in such a costume: my boots, as you see, are full of holes. What refreshment will you take?"

"Do not stand on ceremony. We have come on business. Here is a purchaser for your estate, Pavel Ivanovitch Tchitchikoff," said Kostanzhoglo.

"I am heartily glad to make your acquaintance. Allow me to shake hands with you."

Tchitchikoff gave him both his hands.

"I should very much like to show you the estate, which is worthy of your attention, Pavel Ivanovitch. But permit me to inquire, gentlemen, whether you have dined?"

"Yes, yes," said Kostanzhoglo, desirous of dismissing the subject. "We will not trespass on your hospitality, and we are going back directly."

"In that case, let us start," said Khlobuyoff, taking up his cap. "Let us go and inspect my disorder and thriftlessness."

The guests put on their caps, and all set out on foot to survey the village. Almost every street was lined on both sides with wretched huts, the tiny, shattered windows of which were filled up with foot-cloths.*

"Yes, let us go and inspect my disorder and thriftlessness," repeated Khlobuyoff. "Of course, it is as well for you that you have dined. Will you believe it, Konstantin Feodorovitch? there is not a single chicken in the house, to such straits have I come!"

He sighed; and, as though sensible that he would meet with but little sympathy from Konstantin Feodorovitch, he took Platonoff's arm, and pressing it close to his breast, he walked on in advance with him. Kostanzhoglo and Tchitchikoff remained behind, and, linking arms, followed the other pair at a distance.

"It's hard, Platon Mikhailovitch, it's hard!" said Khlobuyoff to Platonoff. "You cannot conceive how hard it is. No money, no food, no shoes! These are surely words in an unknown tongue to you. All this would be but a trifle were I but young and alone. But when all these misfortunes attack you in your

* The long strips of cloth which peasants wind about their feet in place of stockings.

old age, when you have a wife and five children by your side, then you grow sad involuntarily, you grow sad."

"Well, and if you were to sell your estate, wouldn't that set you right?"

"Set me right indeed!" exclaimed Khlobuyoff, with a wave of the hand. "Everything must go to pay my debts, and there won't be a thousand roubles left for me."

"Then what are you going to do?"

"God knows!"

"Why do you not undertake something to extricate yourself from such a position?"

"What should I undertake?"

"Get some employment."

"I was a governmental secretary. But what sort of a place would they give me now? How am I to accept some paltry remuneration of five hundred roubles or so? I have a wife and five children, remember."

"Get a situation as overseer."

"And who would intrust his property to me? I have ruined my own."

"Well, but if hunger and death threaten, something must be done. I will ask my brother whether he cannot get you some employment through someone in the city."

"No, Platon Mikhailovitch," replied Khlobuyoff, sighing, and pressing his hand warmly. "I am good for nothing now. I have become decrepit before my time, and my loins ache from my old sins, and I have rheumatism in my shoulders. Of what use am I? And besides, a great many lucrative places have already been established for the benefit of useless people. God forbid that the taxes of the poorer classes should be increased on my account!"

"Behold the fruits of dissipation!" thought Platonoff. "This is worse than my heedlessness."

In the meantime, while they had been thus conversing, Kostanzhoglo, as he walked behind them with Tchitchikoff, was quite beside himself with rage.

"Just see," said Kostanzhoglo, pointing with his finger, "to what a state of misery he has reduced his peasants! Why, there are neither carts nor horses here. If murrain breaks out a man ought not to consider his own property. He ought to sell all his own belongings at once, and provide the peasant with cattle, in order that he may not be left for a single day without the means of pursuing his work. However, things cannot be remedied for years here. The peasants have become lazy, dissipated drunkards. If you ever allow them to remain without work for even one year, you ruin them for ever; they grow used to rags and a vagabond life. And what land! Look at the land!" he said, pointing to the fields, which soon made their appearance behind the cabins. "They are all water-meadows.

I could raise flax, and make five thousand roubles out of that alone. I could plant beets, and get four thousand out of them. And look yonder; on the slope a forest formerly arose: there is nothing now. He has planted no grain—I know that. And look at those valleys. I would raise such a forest there that the crows could not fly to the top of it. The idea of flinging away such treasures of land! And if there was nothing to plough with, he might have cultivated the vegetable garden with a spade: he might have undertaken that garden himself. Take the spade in your own hand; make your wife, your children, your servants do it too; if you must die beasts, at all events die over your work. You will then at least die in the fulfilment of your duty; and if not, you can eat yourself for dinner like a pig!" So saying, Kostanzhoglo spat, and his splenetic temper darkened his brow with a gloomy cloud.

When they advanced farther, and stood upon the crest of a declivity overgrown with cytisus, and looked down upon the gleaming bends of the river, first at the distant valley, where a portion of General Betrishtcheff's house peeped forth from the encircling forest, and then at the wooded hill beyond, veiled in the blue mist of distance, Tchitchikoff suddenly said, "If some nice groves were planted here, the village would transcend everything in the world in beauty."

"So you are a lover of fine prospects!" said Kostanzhoglo, with a quick, stern glance at him. "Look here! if you take to running after views, you will be left with no bread. Look out for your fields, and not for beauty. Beauty will come of itself. Let it serve you for an example, that the best and handsomest cities are those where each man has built according to his own convenience and taste. Those which have been built by rule are nothing but a collection of barracks. Away with beauty! Look to practical results!"

"It's a pity that it is necessary to wait so long; I should so like to see everything in the proper condition."

"Patience! Work for a few years: plant, sow, till the soil, without a moment's rest. It is hard, very hard; but later on, when the earth has been well turned over, it will begin to assist you of itself, just as though it were a machine. Yes, my dear fellow, over and above your seventy hands or so, seven hundred invisible ones will begin to toil. Everything will be increased tenfold. I never move a finger now—everything runs by itself. Yes, Nature loves patience; that is the law which God himself has prescribed to her."

"When I listen to you, I am conscious of a great access of force. My courage rises," said Tchitchikoff.

"That's a nice way to plough land!" exclaimed Kostanzhoglo, with a keen feeling of indignation, pointing to the slope. "I can't stay here any longer; it's death to me to gaze upon such disorder and desolation! You can come to an understanding

with him now, without my assistance. Get this treasure out of that fool's hands as speedily as possible. He is only dishonouring the gifts of God." So saying, Kostanzhoglo, who was already clouded by the bilious disposition of his perturbed spirit, took leave of Tchitchikoff, and, having overtaken their host, began to say farewell to him.

"I beseech you, Konstantin Feodorovitch," said the astonished host; "you have only just arrived, and yet you are going already!"

"I can't stay. I have an imperative engagement at home," replied Kostanzhoglo. Whereupon he hastily took leave, seated himself in his carriage, and drove off.

It seemed as though Khlobuyoff understood the cause of his departure.

"Konstantin Feodorovitch cannot stand it," said he; "it is not pleasant for such a manager as he is to look at this disorder. Believe me, Pavel Ivanovitch, I did not even plant grain this year. As sure as I am an honest man, I had no seed, not to mention the fact that there were no means of ploughing. They say that your brother is a capital manager, Platon Mikhailovitch; but Konstantin Feodorovitch—well, he's a Napoleon in his own line. In truth, I often think, why are so much brains put into one head? Why couldn't I at least have one little bit in my own stupid noddle? Look to yourselves, gentlemen; walk cautiously over the bridge lest you tumble into the pool. I ordered the planks to be repaired last spring. What I feel most compunction about is my poor peasants; I perceive the need of an example for them, but what sort of an example am I for anyone? And what am I to do? I cannot be exacting and strict. How am I to inculcate order in them, when I am so disorderly myself? Take them under your charge, Pavel Ivanovitch. I should have given them their liberty long ago, but that it would have been of no advantage to anyone. I see that it is necessary first of all to bring them to such a state that they shall know how to order their own lives. It is requisite that a man should be stern and just, and live among them, in order to produce an effect on them by his own example and his unwearying activity. I perceive, from my own case, that the Russian man cannot get along without someone to urge him forwards: without that he falls dozing, and decays."

"It is strange," said Platonoff, "that a Russian should be capable of thus falling into drowsiness and decay; that, unless you watch the man of the lower classes with all your eyes, he turns out a drunkard and good-for-nothing!"

"That arises from the lack of civilisation," remarked Tchitchikoff.

"God knows what is the cause of it!" went on Khlobuyoff, "Surely, we are civilised. I have attended lectures at the university, and what have I to show for being at the university?

Come, now, what have I learned? They not only did not teach me to live an orderly life, but they even tried their best to teach me the art of spending as much money as possible on every new refinement or comfort, and they made me acquainted with as many matters as possible which require the expenditure of money. Why was I educated in so senseless a way? Yes, and look at my comrades. Two or three of them derived some real advantage from it, and possibly because they would have been sensible in any case; but the rest only endeavoured to learn things which ruin the health and entice money from one's pocket. Thus, we always select in civilisation the things which are the worst of all; we grasp the surface, but not the substance. No, Pavel Ivanovitch, we do not understand how to live, but for what cause, by Heaven! I cannot say."

"There must be some cause," remarked Tchitchikoff.

Poor Khlobuyoff sighed deeply several times, and proceeded as follows: "It sometimes seems to me that the Russian is a lost being. He wants to do everything, and can do nothing. He keeps thinking that he will begin a new life on the morrow, but nothing comes of it. On that very same evening he overfeeds himself, so that he can do nothing but wink, and cannot manage his tongue. He sits and stares at everyone like an owl. Truly, we are all just like that."

"Yes," said Tchitchikoff, laughing: "such things do happen."

"Let us take still another turn in this direction," said Khlobuyoff. "Let us now inspect the peasants' fields."

The views on their way back were the same. Slatternly disorder appeared everywhere. Everything was neglected and abandoned. An angry woman in a dirty gown was beating a poor little girl to death, and swearing by all the devils in every direction. Farther on, two peasant men were observing the wrath of the drunken woman with stoical indifference. One of them was scratching his back while the other was yawning. Yawns were even visible on the buildings, whose roofs were gaping. Platonoff, too, on his side, yawned as he gazed at them. "My future property, these peasants," thought Tchitchikoff. "Hole on hole, and patch on patch." And, in fact, on the top of one cabin lay a gate instead of a roof; the decaying walls were propped up with poles, which had been removed from the master's barns. It was evident that Trishkin's method of dealing with his coat prevailed in the domestic management. The people here cut off the cuffs and the tails to patch the elbows.*

"Your estate is not in an enviable condition," remarked Tchitchikoff, as they entered the owner's house.

There they were struck by the commingling of poverty with glittering trifles, mementoes of past luxury. A figure of Shakspeare sat on the inkstand; on the table there lay a dainty ivory

* An allusion to a popular fable by Kruiloff, in which he describes a man's method of repairing his coat.

scratchback. The visitors were received by the mistress of the house, dressed tastefully and in the latest fashion, who talked about the city, and the theatre which had been started there. The four children also were prettily dressed and in good taste, and they even had a governess. However, this made them all the more sad to contemplate, for they were thin and sickly. It would have been better had they been clothed in striped petticoats and simple blouses, and had they been allowed to run about the yard by themselves, and had in no wise differed from the robust village children. The hostess was soon joined by a lady guest—some empty-headed chatterer—and, finally, the ladies retired to their own apartments, whereupon, the children running after them, the men were left alone.

"What is your price for the estate now?" inquired Tchitchikoff. "I ask this, I tell you frankly, in order to learn your ultimate, your lowest price; for the property is in a worse condition than I had anticipated."

"In the very worst, Pavel Ivanovitch," answered Khlobuyoff. "And that is not all. I will not conceal from you the additional fact that, out of the hundred souls which are set down on the census list, only fifty are among the living. That is the result of the cholera among us. Some others have taken their leave without passports; so that they, too, may be reckoned among the dead. If they were to be demanded by the mortgagees the whole estate would pass into the courts. Therefore I will only ask you thirty thousand roubles."

Tchitchikoff began to meditate and to bargain.

"Mercy on us! Thirty thousand! For such an estate—thirty thousand roubles! Come, take twenty-five thousand."

Platonoff felt ashamed for his friend. "Conclude the sale, Pavel Ivanovitch," he said. "You can get that much for the property at any time. If you will not give him thirty thousand, my brother and I will join together and purchase it."

"Very good, I agree," said Tchitchikoff in alarm. "Very good; but only on condition that half of the money shall not be paid for a year."

"No, Pavel Ivanovitch, I cannot consider that for a moment. Give me half on the spot, and the remainder in a fortnight. The bank would lend me that amount, if that were only enough to satisfy the leeches."

"Really? Well, well," said Tchitchikoff. "I have only ten thousand upon me at present." In point of fact, he was lying: he had twenty thousand in all, not counting the money which Kostanzhoglo had lent him. But it pained him to part with so much at one time.

"No, thank you, Pavel Ivanovitch! I tell you that it is absolutely necessary that I should have fifteen thousand."

"Well, only five thousand will be lacking. I do not kno where to get them on the spur of the moment."

"I will lend you five thousand to-morrow," said Platonoff.

"Will you really?" exclaimed Tchitchikoff, thinking to himself, "Well, this is very opportune that he should lend me that money." They then struck hands on the bargain. Tchitchikoff's dressing-case was brought from the calash, and ten thousand roubles were taken from it, which amount Tchitchikoff handed to Khlobuyoff as earnest money. He promised to bring him the remaining five thousand roubles on the morrow; that is to say, he promised. But he meant to bring only three thousand or so, after a lapse of two or three days, and, in fact, to put it off still longer if possible. Pavel Ivanovitch particularly disliked to let any money pass out of his hands. Even in a case of extreme necessity, it always seemed to him better to surrender the money to-morrow than to-day. That is to say, he proceeded as we all do. We all find it agreeable to put off a creditor. Let him polish his spine in the anteroom for a while. Just as though he could not wait! What business is it of ours that every hour may be precious to him, and that his affairs may suffer from it? Come to-morrow, my good fellow; I have no time to attend to you to-day.

"Where shall you live in future?" Platonoff now inquired of Khlobuyoff. "Have you any other village?"

"None at all; I shall go to town. I have a little house there. It makes no difference. It would have been necessary to do so in any case, for the sake of the children. They must have masters in the law of God, in music and dancing. It is impossible to procure them in the village, of course."

"Not a morsel of bread, and yet his children must learn to dance!" thought Tchitchikoff.

"This is queer," thought Platonoff.

"But we must wet down the contract in some way," said Khlobuyoff. "Hey, there, Kiriushka! fetch a bottle of champagne, my good fellow."

"There's not a bit of bread, but there is champagne," thought Tchitchikoff.

Platonoff did not know what to think.

Khlobuyoff had provided himself with champagne, in case of an emergency. He had sent to town—what was to be done? Kvas is not sold in the shops on credit, and yet a man must drink. However, a Frenchman who had recently come from St. Petersburg with some wines allowed everyone to take them on credit. There was nothing else for Khlobuyoff to do but to buy some champagne from him without paying for it.

This champagne was now brought. They drank three glasses of it, and grew merry. Khlobuyoff unbent; he became charming and sociable, and overflowed with anecdotes and wit. He displayed in his conversation so much knowledge of men and the world, he had observed many things so well and faithfully, he depicted his fellow-landowners so aptly and skilfully in a

few words, he so clearly perceived the errors and failings of them all, he knew so thoroughly the history of the ruined ones —the why and the how of their decay—he knew how to describe their habits with so much originality and ability, that both of his hearers were enchanted with his discourse, and felt inclined to pronounce him an extremely clever man.

"I am astonished," said Tchitchikoff, "that you, with such ability, can hit upon no plans or resources."

"I have some plans," replied Khlobuyoff, and immediately he overwhelmed them with a whole mountain of projects. Every-one of these was so senseless, so extraordinary, so little derived from any acquaintance with men and with the world, that all his hearers could do was to shrug their shoulders and say, "Good heavens! what an immeasurable gulf exists between the know-ledge of men and the world and the art of making use of that knowledge!" Everything was founded on the immediate procuring from some quarter or another of a sum of one or two hundred thousand roubles. Then, it seemed to Khlobuyoff, everything would come right, and his estate would be managed as it should be; his income might be quadrupled, all damage might be repaired, and he would be placed in a position to pay his debts; and he concluded his speech thus: "But what do you advise me to do? There is not, no, there is not in existence, a philanthropist who could make up his mind to advance me two hundred, or even one hundred, thousand roubles as a loan. Plainly, God wills it not."

"The idea," thought Tchitchikoff, "that God should send that fool two hundred thousand roubles!"

"I have an aunt, though, who is worth three millions," pursued Khlobuyoff. "She is a pious old woman, and gives money to churches and monasteries; but she is slow in assisting her nearest relatives. She's an aunt of the ancient pattern, well worth inspection. She has four hundred canaries, and her poodle-dogs, parasites, and servants are such as are not to be seen elsewhere nowadays. The youngest of her servants must be sixty years old, though she always addresses him as 'Hey, there, boy!' If a guest does not behave to suit her, she orders the viands to be carried past him at dinner. And it is done: that's what she is like!"

Platonoff burst into a laugh.

"What is her name, and where does she live?" inquired Tchitchikoff.

"She lives in our town. Her name is Alexandra Ivanovna Khanasarova."

"Why do not you appeal to her?" asked Platonoff, with sympathy. "It seems to me that, if she could realise the condi-tion of your family, she would not refuse you help."

"Well, no; she would. She is rather strong-minded; indeed, she's a flinty old lady, Platon Mikhailovitch! And she has

plenty of other courtiers to hang about her without me. There's one man who aspires to the governorship. He has claimed relationship with her, and is trying to get hold of her fortune. God be with him! perhaps he may succeed."

"The fool!" thought Tchitchikoff. "I myself would wait upon such an aunt as that, just as a nurse waits upon a child!"

"What dry work talking is!" said Khlobuyoff. "Hey, there, Kiriushka! fetch another bottle of champagne."

"No, no; I shall not drink any more," said Platonoff.

"Nor I," added Tchitchikoff; and they both declined in a very decided manner.

"Well, then, at least promise to visit me in town. I give a dinner to our city officials on the 8th of July."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Platonoff. "A dinner in this state of affairs, when you are utterly ruined!"

"What am I to do? I can't help it. It is my duty," answered Khlobuyoff. "They have entertained me."

Platonoff opened his eyes to their fullest extent. Up to that moment he had not been aware that there exist in the cities and towns of Russia certain wise individuals whose lives are an absolutely unsolvable problem. It seems as though an individual of this class were ruined; he is head over ears in debt; he has no property whatever, and yet he gives a dinner, and all his guests say that it is the last, that their host will be carried off to prison on the morrow. Ten years elapse, and the wise man is still in existence, he is still more deeply in debt than before, and is still giving a dinner; and the guests, as usual, think it will be the last, and again feel convinced that the morrow will see their host in prison.

Khlobuyoff's house in town presented a remarkable spectacle. One day the pope, clad in his vestments, would be celebrating a prayer service; and on the morrow some French actors would be holding a rehearsal there. On one day not a crumb of bread was to be found in the place; on the following, there was a hospitable reception of artists and painters, and magnificent presents for everybody. Sometimes such very embarrassing intervals occurred, that anyone in Khlobuyoff's place would have hung or shot himself; but he was saved from such a course by a religious turn of mind, which in him was blended in some queer fashion with a dissipated life.

At these bitter and difficult moments he perused the lives of the saints and penitents, who had schooled their minds to soar above misfortune. His soul became very tender at such times: he grew gentle of spirit, and his eyes filled with tears. He prayed; and strange to say, some unexpected succour nearly always arrived from some quarter or other: either some one of his old friends remembered him, and sent him money, or some passing stranger lady having heard his history by accident, with

the impulsive generosity characteristic of the feminine heart, sent him a handsome present, or rendered him a service in some quarter of which he never heard. Then he piously acknowledged the boundless mercy of providence, had a service of prayer celebrated out of gratitude, and began his life of dissipation afresh.

"I'm sorry for him, I really am," said Platonoff to Tchitchikoff, as they were driving away, after having taken leave of him.

"He's the Prodigal Son!" replied Tchitchikoff. "Such people deserve no pity."

And they both soon ceased to think of him—Platonoff, because he was accustomed to gaze on all things and people languidly and sleepily. His heart suffered at the sight of suffering, but the impression which was left on his soul was never a profound one. Besides, after the lapse of a few minutes he no more thought of Khlobuyoff, as he no longer thought of himself. Tchitchikoff did not think of Khlobuyoff, because all his thoughts were seriously pre-occupied with his purchase. Consider it as he might, turn it on whatever side he would, he perceived that the purchase was an advantageous one in any case. He might be able to mortgage it. He might contrive so as to mortgage merely the dead and fugitive serfs. He might arrange so that all the best land could be first sold piecemeal, and the estate mortgaged all the same afterwards. He might also make arrangements to cultivate the property himself, and become a proprietor after the pattern of Kostanzhoglo, availing himself of the latter's advice, as his neighbour and benefactor. He might moreover proceed in such a manner as to sell the estate to private persons —that is of course in case he did not wish to undertake the care of it himself—thus merely retaining for himself the deceased and fugitive serfs. Then another means of profit presented itself to his mind: he might abandon this region entirely, and not pay Kostanzhoglo the money which he had borrowed from him. Strange thought! Not that Tchitchikoff entertained it, but it suddenly presented itself to his mind mocking and laughing and winking at him. A shameless hussy of a thought! An unruly creature, forsooth!

Our hero felt content—content because he was now a landed proprietor, not in fancy, but in reality: a proprietor who had land and appurtenances and peasants—peasants who were not fictions, not creatures of the imagination, but actual persons. And by degrees he began to sway about, and to rub his hands, and to wink at himself, and to blow some march through his fist, placed to his lips as though it had been a trumpet; and he even uttered a few encouraging words aloud, as well as some nicknames addressed to himself, such as "My little bull-dog," and "My plump little chicken." But recalling the fact that he was not alone, he suddenly ceased, and endeavoured by some means to check the ill-timed outburst of his rapture; and when Platonoff, taking some of our hero's noise for fragments of a

remark addressed to him, inquired, "What is it?" he replied, "Nothing."

"Stop!" at last shouted Platonoff to the coachman.

Tchitchikoff glanced about him, and perceived that they had, for a long time, been driving through a magnificent grove. The trunks of the beech-trees and the aspens, gleaming like a snowy palisade, rose in light and graceful outlines against the background formed by the tender green of the newly unfolded foliage. The nightingales were trilling loudly in rivalry. The wood-tulips gleamed yellow amid the grass. Our hero could not account to himself for being in this beautiful place, when he had so recently been in the midst of naked fields. Out from among the trees peeped a church of white stone. At the end of the road, too, a gentleman made his appearance, and advanced to meet them: he wore a leather cap with a peak, and carried a long dry stick in his hand. A hound of English breed, with long, slender legs, ran on before him.

"Ah! here's my brother," said Platonoff. "Stop, coachman!" and then he descended from the calash: Tchitchikoff did the same. The dogs had already succeeded in licking each other over. Lively, slender-legged Azor licked Yarb on the nose, then he licked Platonoff's hand, then leaped on Tchitchikoff and licked him on the ear.

The brothers embraced.

"Ah! pray, Platon, how have you been treating me?" said the second brother, whose name was Vasiliy.

"What do you mean?" answered Platon indifferently.

"What, indeed! Not a sound or a syllable from you for three days! Pyetukh's groom brought your horse home. 'He has gone off with some gentleman,' he reported. Now, if you had only said one word as to where and why, and for how long a time you were going! But no! Pray, brother, how can you behave so? And God knows what things I have been fancying all these days!"

"Well, what is to be done about it? I forgot," answered Platon. "We went to Konstantin Feodorovitch's. He salutes you, and our sister also greets you. Pavel Ivanovitch, let me introduce you: my brother, Vasiliy; brother Vasiliy, this is Pavel Ivanovitch Tchitchikoff." The men thus invited to mutual acquaintance shook hands and took off their caps.

"Who can this Tchitchikoff be?" thought brother Vasiliy. "Brother Platon is not very choice in his acquaintances." He scrutinised Tchitchikoff as closely as politeness would permit, and perceived that our hero was a very respectable-looking person.

Tchitchikoff also stared, as much as propriety allowed, at brother Vasiliy, and perceived that the latter was shorter of stature than Platon, that his hair was darker, and that his face was far from being as handsome, but that there was much more

life and animation, more heartfelt kindness in his features. It was evident that he was less given to dreaming. However, to this Pavel Ivanovitch paid little heed.

"I have made up my mind, Vasya, to travel through Holy Russia with Pavel Ivanovitch. Perhaps that will cure me of my hypochondria."

"How could you make up your mind so quickly?" said brother Vasiliy, taken aback; and he came near adding, "and go off with a man whom you see for the first time, and who may be a worthless fellow, and the Devil knows who?" Quite incredulous, he glanced askance at Tchitchikoff, and observed his remarkable respectability.

They turned into a gateway on the right. The courtyard was old-fashioned: the house also was old-fashioned, of a sort which is not built now, with sheds beneath the lofty roof. Two gigantic lime-trees grew in the middle of the yard, and covered nearly half of it with shade. Beneath them stood several wooden benches. Syringas and wild cherry-trees in blossom surrounded the place, covering the walls completely with their flowers and leaves. The manor-house was almost wholly concealed: only the doors and windows peered prettily out beneath and between the boughs. Through the forest-trees, straight as arrows, the kitchen, the storerooms, and the cellars were visible.

Moreover, one could hear the nightingales gaily warbling, and the whole grove gave back a loud echo. A feeling of peace and pleasantness stole into the soul. Everything smacked of those untroubled times when men lived in amity, and when all was simple and plain. Brother Vasiliy invited Tchitchikoff to take a seat. They all sat down on the benches under the lime-trees.

A lad of seventeen, in a handsome blouse of pink cotton, brought some decanters filled with all sorts of fruit kvas, of various colours, some thick like butter, others foaming like carbonated lemonade, and placed them before the gentlemen. After setting the decanters on the table, he picked up a spade which was leaning against a tree, and went off to the garden. All the servants of the Platonoff brothers, like those of their brother-in-law, Kostanzhoglo, were gardeners; or, to speak more accurately, all the house-servants took turns at garden duties.

Brother Vasiliy insisted that servants were not a separate class; that, if needed, one could entirely dispense with them; that everybody was capable of handing things, and that it was not necessary to appoint certain people to do so; that the Russian is a fine, alert fellow, and no sluggard, so long as he goes about in blouse and peasant coat; but that as soon as he dons a foreign surtout he instantly becomes awkward, dull, lazy; no longer changes his shirt; entirely ceases to take baths; sleeps in his coat, and beneath it raises a crop of foreign fleas, and an

innumerable multitude of other insects. And on this point, he may have been right. In Platonoff village the people were dressed in a particularly dainty manner: the head-dresses of the women were covered with gold, and the sleeves of their blouses were made of the borders of genuine Turkish shawls.

"Won't you take some refreshment?" said brother Vasiliy to Tchitchikoff, pointing to the decanters. "These are various kinds of kvas, for which our house has long been celebrated."

Tchitchikoff poured out a glass from the first decanter; it was mead, such as he had drunk in Poland in days gone by; it sparkled like champagne, and there was so much gas in it that it leapt from his mouth into his nose. "Nectar!" said he. Then he drank a glassful from a second decanter. Its contents were even better than those of the first.

"That's a liquor, that's a liquor worth drinking!" said Tchitchikoff. "I may say that I have drunk the very best fruit wine at your brother-in-law, Konstantin Feodorovitch's, and the very best of kvas at your house."

"But we have fruit wine also: my sister made this. In what direction do you propose travelling?" asked brother Vasiliy.

"I am travelling," answered Tchitchikoff, swaying lightly on the bench, and stroking his knee, "not so much on my own account as on the business of others. General Betrishtcheff, my intimate friend, and I may even say my benefactor, has requested me to notify his relatives of his daughter's marriage. Relatives are relatives, of course: but I am also travelling on my own account, so to speak; for, not to mention the benefitting of health, travelling is, so to speak, a book in itself, and it is a second education to see the world and the different sorts of people."

Brother Vasiliy fell into thought. "This man speaks rather rhetorically, yet there is some truth in what he says," thought he. After a brief silence he turned to Platon: "I begin to think, Platon, that travelling may really enliven you. There is nothing the matter with you but spiritual lethargy. You have simply fallen asleep, and that not out of satiety or weariness, but from the lack of vivid impressions and sensations. I am in precisely the contrary condition. I should be very glad not to feel things so acutely, and not to take everything which happens so much to heart."

"You seemingly like to take things to heart," replied Platon. "You search out disquiet, and manufacture troubles for yourself."

"Why should I manufacture them, when something disagreeable is lying in wait at every step?" said Vasiliy. "Have you heard of the trick that Lyenitzuin has played us during your absence? He has seized the bit of wild land where we celebrate the red hill. In the first place, I will not surrender that land for

any money whatever. My peasants celebrate the Krasnaya Gorka* there every spring, and all the memories of the village are bound up with it: in my eyes, a custom is a sacred thing, and I am ready to make any sacrifice for its sake."

"He does not know that, and that is the reason why he has seized the land," said Platon. "He is a new-comer; he has only just arrived from Petersburg; things must be explained and made clear to him."

"He knows, he knows perfectly well. I sent him word, but he replied impertinently."

"You will have to go to him yourself, and explain matters. Talk it over with him yourself."

"No, indeed! He puts on too many airs altogether. I will not go near him. Go yourself, if you like."

"I would go were it not for the fact that I have nothing to do with the management of affairs. He might mislead and cheat me."

"I will go, if you think proper," said Tchitchikoff.

Vasiliy glanced at our hero and thought, "This man must be very fond of travelling!"

"Only tell me what sort of a person this Lyenitzuin is," pursued Tchitchikoff, "and the scope of the matter."

"I am ashamed to impose so unpleasant a commission on you. In my opinion, the man is a worthless fellow; he belongs to the petty landed nobility of our government; he has served his time in Petersburg, having there married someone's illegitimate daughter, and acquired a great opinion of himself. He sets the fashion. But people do not live in an utterly stupid way with us. The fashion is no ukaz to our minds, and Petersburg is not the church."

"Exactly," said Tchitchikoff; "and what is the point of the business?"

"He needs some land, you see. And I would have let him take some other plot for nothing, but not this wild strip. However, he's a quarrelsome fellow, and he thinks that I am frightened."

"In my opinion, it would be better to talk the matter over.

* With the first week after Easter commences the festival of the *Krasnaya Gorka*, "the red or little bright hill," the term referring to the red colour of the Easter eggs, to the brightness of the spring, and the name "little hill" being given to it because it was originally held or inaugurated on some high place. It lasts from Low Sunday till the end of June, and its chief feature is the *khorovod*—the circling dance attended by choral song. The chief singer on these occasions is a woman, who holds in her hands a round loaf and a red egg, each an emblem of the sun. Turning her face and hands towards the east, she begins one of these choral songs, which is then taken up by the chorus; and in many places this is attended or followed by the destruction of the figure of death or winter. Many of the songs are addressed to the goddess of love, the presiding genius of the season, or at least bear reference to her influence; and in some places it is customary to sing them under the windows of newly married couples. (W. R. S. Ralston's *Songs of the Russian People*, p. 221.)

Perhaps you will not repent of it if you intrust the matter to me. General Betrishtcheff also——"

"But I am ashamed that you should be obliged to talk with such a man."

"Never mind that; to-morrow morning I will call upon him, and everything will be settled to your satisfaction. I am sure of it."

On the next day Tchitchikoff called upon Lyenitzuin in a neighbourly way, and informed him that he had purchased Khlobuyoff's estate. Lyenitzuin and Khlobuyoff were relatives, and our hero speedily guessed that chance had brought him to the residence of the man who was desirous of securing the civil-governorship of the town, so as to be near the aunt with the three millions of roubles. He had always known how to ingratiate himself with her. He was offered a much higher post, he said, but he preferred to remain near the dear relative who had treated him so kindly since his infancy.

"That is a noble sentiment," said Pavel Ivanovitch.

Our hero greatly pleased Lyenitzuin, who considered that he had a very intelligent look. Moveover, Tchitchikoff showed himself very respectful and indulgent as regards the persons they talked about, excepting perhaps Khlobuyoff; he also knew a large number of noblemen of that district and the neighbouring ones, and he seemed to be both a skilful business man and gave himself out wealthy, with large connections in society. At last he remarked to Lyenitzuin:

"It is you, no doubt, who will some day inherit the fortune of Alexandra Ivanovna Khanassaroff, or at least the greater part of it."

"Those who assert that are in the wrong," replied Lyenitzuin. "I hear that she has made a will leaving the bulk of her fortune to the convents."

"How shameful! The convents are rich enough already. But why not prevail upon her to make a fresh will? I can't calmly see you disinherited like that. I shall stay some time in the town and obtain an introduction to the venerable Alexandra Ivanovna, and if you like—to oblige you—I will insinuate to her that the convents are rich enough already. Why not draw up a fresh will, nicely put together, which she would only have to sign?"

"Oh," said Lyenitzuin; "I'm afraid she wouldn't sign."

"Old people are obstinate, I know," rejoined our hero. "But no matter; since she is going to die, why shouldn't she be made to leave her property to you. Besides, it's only a name to sign; and in my opinion, as she is so obstinate, why, I should get somebody to sign for her."

"Hush! hush! One moment!"

Thereupon, as if a breeze had sprung up and as if Lyenitzuin feared a draught, he rose, drew down the blinds, pulled the curtains forward, and cast a glance into the adjoining rooms. Then

as he closed the doors again, he contrived to lock them, no doubt by mistake. Next he and Tchitchikoff indulged in some intimate conversation, carried on in so low a tone that not a word of it reached us until Lyenitzuin drew back the curtains and unlocked the doors, then seating himself again on the sofa and offering his hand to our hero who pressed it affectionately.

Said Tchitchikoff: "Only all this must remain secret. It is not so much the crime itself, as the scandal it often creates that proves injurious."

"That's so, that's so," returned Lyenitzuin, drooping his head completely on one side.

"How delightful to encounter a similarity of opinion!" exclaimed Tchitchikoff. "I am engaged in an affair which is both legal and illegal: in appearance it is illegal, in reality it is legal. As I need some chattels to mortgage, I do not wish to induce anyone to sell me anything which I might not pay for. If a catastrophe should occur to me, which God forbid! it would not be pleasant for others; so I have decided only to acquire sundry fugitive and dead souls, which have not yet been struck off the register, in order, at one and the same time, to benefit myself and to perform a deed of Christian charity by freeing the unfortunate proprietors from the necessity of paying the taxes for them. So we merely execute a formal deed of sale between us, as though living serfs were in question."

"But all the same, this is a very strange proceeding," thought Lyenitzuin; and he drew his chair back a little. "Yes, the transaction is, of a character——" he resumed aloud, but he could not make up his mind to say anything further.

"There will be no risk, for it will be kept private," replied Tchitchikoff, "and, moreover, between honourable men——"

"But still, on the whole——"

"It is a perfectly clear transaction, and there is no trickery about it," said Tchitchikoff, with great frankness and directness. "What the nature of the business is, we have just decided; it lies between honourable men, who have reached years of discretion and who are of good understanding apparently. It takes place in private between them." So saying, he looked the other in the eye with a frank and ingenuous expression.

Clever as Lyenitzuin was, accomplished as he was in all methods of transacting business, he was on this occasion thrown quite out of his calculations; the more so as he had contrived, in some remarkable manner, to entangle himself in his own net. In reality, he was not at all fitted for dishonesty.

"This is an extraordinary affair!" he said to himself. "Just try to enter into an intimate friendship with the best of men, without repenting of it! There's a puzzle for you."

However, fate and circumstances seemed to favour Tchitchikoff in a special manner. Exactly as though with the object of rendering assistance in this difficult question, the young mistress

of the house, Lyenitzuin's wife, entered the room at that moment; she was thin, pale, and short, but dressed in Petersburg fashion, and was extremely fond of people who were *comme il faut*. Behind her came a nurse, bearing in her arms her first infant, a pledge of the tender love of the recently wedded couple. Tchitchikoff completely fascinated the Petersburg lady with his little skip, his agile walk, and his trick of inclining his head on one side; and he captivated the baby also.

At first the latter set up a yell, but Tchitchikoff—by dint of the words "Agu, agu, darling!" by tickling it with his finger, and by the beauty of the carnelian seal on his watch—succeeded in enticing the child into his own arms. Then he began to toss it up to the very ceiling, thereby eliciting a pleased laugh, which greatly delighted its parents. But whether from mutual satisfaction, or from some other cause, the infant suddenly misbehaved himself.

"Oh heavens!" exclaimed Lyenitzuin's wife: "he has completely ruined your coat."

Tchitchikoff looked. The sleeve of his coat, which was quite new, was utterly spoiled. "I'd like to shoot you, you little devil!" he said to himself in his wrath.

The host, the hostess, and the nurse all ran for some *eau-de-Cologne*, and began to scrub the sleeve in all directions.

"It's nothing, it's nothing, it's of no consequence whatever," said Tchitchikoff, endeavouring to communicate as cheerful an expression as possible to his countenance. "Is it possible for a child to spoil anything at this golden period of his existence?" he repeated; and, at the same time, he said to himself, "You little brute! I wish the wolves had eaten you: that would suit me to a hair, you cursed little rascal!"

This apparently trifling circumstance made the host take a favourable view of Tchitchikoff's business. How could he refuse anything to a guest who had bestowed so many innocent caresses on the baby, and who had so magnanimously paid for them at the cost of his own coat!

"Permit me, then, to repay your service," said our hero, "with another one. I wish to act as mediator in your affair with the Platonoff brothers. You want some land, do you not?"

Then Tchitchikoff entered into a long explanation as regards the strip of soil which Lyenitzuin had appropriated, and he prevailed upon him to restore it to the Platonoffs in exchange for some other land. This matter being settled, Tchitchikoff took leave of Lyenitzuin and returned to make his report to Vasiliy. With his usual tactics, moreover, he prevailed upon the latter to sell him some dead souls; and then, Platonoff having fallen ill, so that he could not resume his travels, our hero set off alone, his friend Tentyotnikoff having in the meanwhile sent him his britchka, which had been left with General Betrishtcheff.

Upon reaching the town he made various arrangements respecting the purchase of Khlobuyoff's estate. However, in lieu of giving another fifteen thousand roubles in cash, he displayed a variety of deeds which seemed to indicate that he possessed large means. He wished to realise, he said, and accordingly, offered his bill at four months' date to Khlobuyoff, who at first demurred to the proposal, declaring that he required ready money. However, as all the persons summoned to serve as witnesses to the deed of sale, and the officials also, spoke in Pavel Ivanovitch's favour, Khlobuyoff feared lest he might appear unreasonable, and finally he accepted the promissory note and signed the deed of sale as if he had received full payment.

Meanwhile Tchitchikoff had secured, through Lyenitzuin, an introduction to Alexandra Ivanovna, the wealthy aunt, and he so ingratiated himself in her favour that at last she could do nothing without consulting him. Still he failed in his efforts to persuade her to make a new will. Three months, moreover, went by without Khlobuyoff being paid and without Tchitchikoff showing any disposition to raise a loan in view of meeting his promissory note. Then suddenly a report was circulated that Pavel Ivanovitch was negotiating the secret sale of the estate, and people were puzzled as to what game he could be playing. A traveller who, on passing through the city, dined one day with the colonel of police, remarked to him in the course of conversation, "I hear that the famous Tchitchikoff is staying here. You are aware, I suppose, that he is journeying through Russia, buying up all the landowners' dead serfs, with an object one can readily guess." This remark was repeated on all sides, and it finally reached the ears of the military governor, just at the time, too, when the latter heard that Alexandra Ivanovna, the wealthy lady, had died, and that seals had been affixed in her house to all the articles of furniture in which she might have secreted either any valuables or a will. People pretended that the old lady's demise had only been reported forty-eight hours after its occurrence; and, moreover, it was insinuated that our hero alone could tell in what manner she had died, as he had been hovering around her till the very last, ordering the servants about as if they had been his own.

Similar remarks are very often made when wealthy people die; still, the military governor, without believing in a crime, considered that the reports which had reached his ears warranted his summoning Tchitchikoff before him. He suspected him, at least, of culpable intriguing, and, wishing to try him, he ordered him, in genuine Russian fashion, to leave the town within forty-eight hours. Tchitchikoff, who had feared something worse, at once felt relieved; he spoke, and spoke so well, that everything, even those atrocious reports, seemed to militate in his favour. He modestly called his excellency's attention to the fact that such an abrupt departure would not only throw his own

affairs into confusion, but would prove extremely prejudicial to the honourable people with whom he had business connections. Finally he was authorised to remain in the city as long as he pleased, but on conditions that he conducted himself properly, and in such a way as not to give rise to any more scandalous reports.

"Prince!" retorted our hero, "I have heard it said, and I believe it true, that it would be easier to stay the waters of the Dnieper or the Volga than the tongues of chatterers in a little town."

He then came forth from this audience possessed of more assurance than formerly; and he did not hide his contempt for the scandal-mongers who for a few hours had believed that he was seriously compromised.

Soon afterwards Khlobuyoff received the fifteen thousand roubles remaining due to him for his estate; and he was seen walking beside Tchitchikoff at the pompous funeral of the wealthy aunt, whose obsequies were defrayed by Lyenitzuin. On the day when the seals were removed from the residence of the deceased a will was found, and all interested parties were summoned by the authorities to hear it read. Lyenitzuin, detained no doubt by the cares of office, did not come until late; and when the perusal of the will was over he received with cold dignity the congratulations of the people present. He was appointed universal legatee, various small legacies being bequeathed to Khlobuyoff, to two lady companions, a couple of poor cousins, and a shrine in the neighbourhood. The poor relations called Lyenitzuin's attention to the fact that five or six coffers, a jewel case, and some sixty pieces of gold and silver plate were missing; but Lyenitzuin, upon hearing this, merely smiled and shrugged his shoulders. He was no doubt fully aware as to where the missing articles had gone.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

TWO WILLS, A FAIR, A LAWYER, AND A HOLY MAN

EVERYTHING in the world has a use of its own. "Whoever desires a thing makes an effort to obtain it," says the proverb. The expedition through the old lady's trunks had been successfully achieved; and as a result, some things had found their way into Tchitchikoff's dressing-case. In short, it had been wisely planned. Tchitchikoff had not exactly been guilty of theft, but he had taken advantage of circumstances. All of us have taken advantage at times, in one manner or another—one, of the forests belonging to the crown; another, of someone's savings; one man will steal from his children for the sake of some itinerant actress; another, from his peasants, for the sake of buying furniture or equipages. What can one do, when so many enticements exist in the world—expensive restaurants with mad prices, and masquerades, and drives and dances with the gipsies? Surely, one cannot always restrain one's self: man is not God. Thus Tchitchikoff, like a very great many people who are fond of every comfort, turned matters to his own advantage.

Tchitchikoff ought now to have left the town, but the roads had become bad. In the meantime, another fair had begun in the town, a genuine aristocratic fair. The first one had been more for horses, cattle, and raw products, and divers peasant manufactures, purchased by drovers and by wholesale dealers. But now, everything which had been purchased at the Nizhegorod fair, high-class wares of every description, had been brought here. Those raiders on the Russian purse, the French, had brought pomades, while French women had brought bonnets—those women who are Egyptian locusts, as Kostanzhoglo expressed it, and who, not content with devouring everything, leave their eggs behind them, buried in the earth.

The bad state of the crops had detained some landowners in the country. On the other hand, the officials who had not suffered from the bad crops turned out in force; so did their wives, to their misfortune. Having read many of those books which have been disseminated of late with the object of inoculating mankind with all sorts of novel requirements, they had conceived a most extraordinary thirst for all manner of new enjoyments. A Frenchman had opened a novel establishment, of a sort hitherto unheard

of in that government—a pleasure-garden,* with a supper at what purported to be a remarkably low price, the half of it being allowed to remain on credit, to boot. This was sufficient to induce not only all the heads of departments, but all the clerks, to visit it, in the expectation of future bribes from petitioners. A desire to show off in each other's presence in the matter of horses and equipages sprang up. There was a great elbowing of different classes for the sake of diversion. In spite of the wretched weather, with mingled snow and rain, elegant calashes flew up and down. Where they all came from, God only knows, but they would not have done discredit to Petersburg itself. Merchants and clerks raised their hats adroitly, and invited the ladies to enter. Bearded traders in fur caps were rarely to be seen. Everything wore a European look.

Tchitchikoff, in a new Persian dressing-gown of gold brocade, was lolling on a divan, and chaffering with an itinerant smuggler-pedlar of Jewish extraction and German accent: and before him lay a piece of the finest cambric, which he had purchased for shirts, and two cardboard boxes of the finest soap, possessed of the most desirable qualities. This was the very same sort of soap which he had formerly been in the habit of obtaining when employed in the custom-house at Radziwill. It really did possess the property of imparting a wonderful softness and whiteness to the cheeks. At the very moment when he, in the character of a *connoisseur*, was making his purchases of these articles, which are indispensable to a well-bred man, the rumble of an approaching carriage became audible, together with the slight answering rattle of the walls and windows of the apartment, and his excellency Alexei Ivanovitch Lyenitzuin entered.

"I submit to your excellency's judgment this cambric, this soap, and this cap, which I purchased yesterday," said Tchitchikoff, while he placed on his head a cap embroidered with gold and pearl beads, and felt full of dignity and grandeur in his character of a Persian shah.

But his excellency, without vouchsafing any reply to our hero, said with a troubled look, "I must have a talk with you on business matters." Anxiety and uneasiness were depicted on his countenance. The worthy merchant with a German accent was instantly dismissed, and they were left alone.

"Do you know what disagreeable thing has happened? Another will by that old woman, executed five years ago, has been found. She bequeaths half of her property to a monastery, and the other half, in equal shares, to her two companions."

Tchitchikoff was taken aback.

"But that will is—nonsense! It signifies nothing. It is set aside by the second one," said he.

"But it is not stated in the second will that the former one is thereby annulled."

* A Vauxhall, literally.

"That is taken for granted. The first is annulled by the last. This is folly. The first will is utterly void. I am well acquainted with the wishes of the deceased. I was with her. Who signed this other will? Who were the witnesses?"

"It was duly witnessed in court. The witnesses were the ex-judge Burmiloff, and Khavanoff."

"That's bad," thought Tchitchikoff. "Khavanoff is said to be an honest man. As for Burmiloff he is a venerable hypocrite, who reads the Apostles in church on festival days. But nonsense! nonsense!" he said aloud, and he immediately felt sufficient firmness to face anything. "I know better than that. I was present at the last moments of the dead woman's life. I know all about it better than anybody else. I am ready to take my personal oath."

These words and his air of decision for the moment reassured Lyenitzuin. The latter was very much excited, and had begun to suspect that there might have been some sort of fraud on Tchitchikoff's part in connection with the will. He now reproached himself for his suspicions. Tchitchikoff's readiness to take his oath was a plain indication of the reverse. We do not know whether Pavel Ivanovitch would actually have had the audacity to take his oath on the Gospel; but, at all events, he was audacious enough to say that he would.

"Make yourself easy on that score," he added. "I will consult a lawyer on this matter. Nothing must be attributed to you. You must keep entirely clear of this affair. But I can stay in the town as long as it suits me."

Tchitchikoff immediately ordered his carriage to be brought to the door, and betook himself to a lawyer's. This lawyer was a man of extraordinary experience. He had fallen under the jurisdiction of the court fifteen years previously, but he had so managed that it had been utterly impossible to prevent him practising his profession. Everybody was perfectly well aware of the fact that he had deserved transportation half a dozen times. He was suspected to the last degree in every quarter, but it was impossible to produce plain and convincing proofs. There really was something uncanny about him, and he might have been boldly proclaimed as a wizard if the history which we are transcribing referred to an uncivilised epoch.

The lawyer amazed Tchitchikoff by the coolness of his demeanour and the filthiness of his dressing-gown, which presented a complete contrast to the handsome mahogany furniture, the gilt clock under a glass shade, the chandelier which peeped forth from the chintz cover protecting it, and all the other objects which surrounded him, and which bore the stamp of European civilisation.

Nothing daunted, however, by the dubious appearance of the lawyer, Tchitchikoff explained the perplexing points of the matter in hand, and sketched a seductive perspective of the gratitude which would infallibly follow sound counsel and assistance.

The jurisconsult replied to this with allusions to the transitory character of all earthly things, and with much art he allowed it to be understood that a stork in the heavens signified nothing with him providing he had a tomtit in the hand.

There was help for it; the tomtit for the hand had to be provided. Then the dubious coolness of the philosopher suddenly vanished. He turned out to be the most good-natured of men, extremely communicative and agreeable in conversation, and not a whit inferior in cleverness to Tchitchikoff himself.

"Permit me to say to you, instead of entering into a long-winded talk, that you certainly cannot have examined the last will thoroughly. It assuredly contains some codicil. Get it into your possession as speedily as possible. Although, of course, it is forbidden to take such things home with one, still, if certain officials are appealed to in the proper way—— I will render assistance on my part."

"I understand," thought Tchitchikoff; and he said, "I really cannot distinctly recall whether there was a codicil or not"—just as though he had not written the will himself.

"The very best thing that you can do will be to look it over. Besides, in any case," the lawyer continued in an amiable way, "you must feel quite at your ease; and you must not take alarm at anything, even if matters seem to be going very badly. Never despair of anything under any circumstances whatever. There is nothing which cannot be remedied. Look at me. I am always tranquil. No matter what critical accusations are brought against me, my composure remains immovable." The face of the lawyer-philosopher did, in point of fact, retain a remarkably tranquil look, which was very re-assuring to Tchitchikoff.

"That is, of course, a matter of the greatest moment; but you must acknowledge, nevertheless, that occasions may arise of such a nature, that an attack on the part of one's enemies may be of such a description, and that there may occur difficult situations of such a sort that all composure is put to flight."

"That is cowardice, believe me," rejoined the philosophical lawyer with great composure and amiability. "Only try to have all transactions set down on paper, and have nothing left to talk alone. And as soon as you perceive that the affair is approaching a solution, and that it is ripe for settlement, do not endeavour to justify and defend yourself, but simply try to introduce some fresh issues which have no connection with the case."

"That is with the object of doing what?"

"Producing confusion, producing confusion, nothing more: you must introduce side issues, extraneous circumstances, into this case, so that other people may become involved in it; the object is to render the matter complicated, neither more nor less. And then let some freshly arrived official from Petersburg unravel it, let him unravel it if he can!" the sagacious lawyer repeated, looking Tchitchikoff straight in the eye with extra-

ordinary satisfaction, just as a teacher contemplates a pupil when he is explaining to him some treacherous passage in the Russian grammar.

"And it will be as well for you to collect such items as are calculated to throw dust in people's eyes," said Tchitchikoff, also gazing with satisfaction into the eyes of the philosopher, like a pupil who has understood his teacher's exposition of a deceptive passage.

"Such items will be provided, they will be provided. Believe me, the brain grows inventive by dint of frequent practice. You will gain a great deal by complicating matters; and we must have as many officials mixed up in it as possible, and their fees must be handsome. In short, as many persons as possible must be drawn into the business. There is no necessity of sacrificing other people for nothing, but we must justify ourselves by means of them, and they must be responsible on paper. They must buy themselves off. There's a harvest for you! In this manner you can complicate and entangle matters, so that no one can understand anything about them. Why am I so calm? Because I know this: when my affairs are going very badly I get everyone implicated in them—the governor and the vice-governor, and the chief of police and the treasurer—I get every one of them involved. I know all their circumstances—just who has a quarrel with whom, and who is offended with whom, and who wants to revenge himself on whom. Then let them extricate themselves if they can: others can be found to replace them. It is only in troubled waters that fish are caught."

Here the philosopher-lawyer stared at Tchitchikoff with all his eyes, and again it was with satisfaction similar to that with which a teacher expounds a treacherous passage in the Russian grammar to his pupil.

"Yes, this man is truly wise," said Tchitchikoff to himself; and he took leave of the jurisconsult in the most amiable and agreeable frame of mind.

Perfectly reassured, he flung himself with careless grace on the elastic cushions of his calash. Then he ordered Selifan to throw the hood back (he had gone to the lawyer with the hood raised, and even with the apron buttoned up), and assumed the exact attitude of a retired colonel of hussars, or of Vishnepokromoff himself, throwing one leg gracefully over the other, and pleasantly presenting to all who met him a face which fairly beamed from beneath a new silk hat, tilted somewhat on one side. Selifan was ordered to drive in the direction of the bazaar. The merchants, both those belonging to the town and the strangers, took off their hats respectfully as they stood at the doors of their shops; and Tchitchikoff, not without dignity, raised his hat in return.

Many of them were already acquainted with him; others, although strangers, were captivated with the attractive appearance

of a gentleman who so well understood how to bear himself, and they greeted him as though they knew him. The fair in the city of Tfuslavl had not yet come to an end: the horse and agricultural fair had closed, and that which embraced fine wares for gentlemen of the highest breeding had opened. The merchants who had arrived on wheels had made up their minds not to return except on runners.

"Pray enter, sir, pray enter, sir!" said the man at the cloth-shop, striking a politely affected attitude as he stood with his head bare, in a German surtout of Moscow make, and holding his hat in one hand while with two fingers of the other he stroked his round, cleanly shaven chin; at the same time displaying an expression of dainty refinement on his face.

Tchitchikoff entered the shop. "Show me some cloth, my good fellow," said he.

The amiable merchant immediately lifted a loose board in the counter; and having thus made an entrance for himself, he found himself inside his shop, with his back to his goods and his face to his customer. Then, with uncovered head and flourishing his hat, he saluted Tchitchikoff once more. Then he put on his hat, and, bending gracefully forwards with both hands resting on the counter, he spoke thus: "What sort of cloth, sir? Do you prefer it of English make, or of domestic manufacture?"

"Of domestic manufacture," replied Tchitchikoff; "but it must be of the best quality, of the sort called English."

"What colours would you like to look at?" inquired the shopman, still swaying to and fro, with his hands still resting on the counter.

"Of an olive or bottle-green tint, or else cranberry colour," said Tchitchikoff.

"I may assert that you shall have the very best sort, than which no better is to be found except in enlightened capitals. Boy, fetch the cloth with number 34 upstairs. That's not it, my friend. No, fetch the other! Why do you always feel yourself above your station, you penniless scamp? Throw that here. Yes, here is the very cloth." And unfolding it from the other end, the shopman lifted it almost to Tchitchikoff's very nose, so that our hero could not only feel its silky gloss with his hand, but even smell it.

"Very good, but that is not what I want," said Tchitchikoff. "I have served in the custom-house service, you see, so I must have the very finest quality; and it must also be of a reddish tint, with rather a cranberry tinge."

"I understand, sir: what you really want is the shade which is now coming into fashion. I have some other cloths of the very best quality. I warn you that the price is high, but they are of the very finest quality."

Then he climbed up to reach some cloth from a shelf. The piece fell down. He unrolled it with the art of a bygone age,

and even forgot for the moment that he belonged to a later generation as he held it to the light, even emerging from his shop to do so, screwing up his eyes as he faced the light, and saying, "'Tis the most exquisite shade of cloth, Navarino smoke-tint and flame-colour."

The cloth was satisfactory; the price was agreed to, although it was with "a prefix," as the dealer declared. Then a clever tearing movement was executed with both hands. Finally it was enveloped in paper in the Russian fashion, with incredible swiftness. The bundle was then encircled with a slender cord, which clasped it with a knot which palpitated with life. Next the cord was snipped off with some shears, and the whole placed in the calash.

"Show me some black cloth," now rang out a voice in the shop.

"Here's Khlobuyoff, deuce take him!" said Tchitchikoff to himself, and he turned his back that he might not see the other; for he considered it ill-bred on the latter's part to enter into any explanation with him in regard to the inheritance. But Khlobuyoff had already espied him.

"How is this, Pavel Ivanovitch? Are you avoiding me intentionally? I am never able to find you, although there are some matters which we must discuss seriously."

"My most respected sir, my most respected sir," said Tchitchikoff, squeezing his hand, "believe me, I am extremely desirous of having a talk with you; but I really have no time." And he said to himself, "May the Devil fly away with you!" when all at once, he saw Murazoff, the wealthy farmer of the brandy revenues, entering the shop. "Ah, my heavens, Afanasiy Vasilievitch!" said Tchitchikoff; "this is a fortunate encounter!"

Then Vishnepokromoff, who entered after him, repeated, "Afanasiy Vasilievitch!" And the well-bred shopman, holding his hat as far from his head as his arm would allow, and bending his whole body forward, exclaimed, "Your most humble servant, Afanasiy Vasilievitch!" All their faces exhibited that dog-like servility which sinful man shows to a millionaire.

Old Murazoff bowed to all of them, and turned directly to Khlobuyoff. "Excuse me: having seen you from a distance entering this shop, I decided to trouble you. If you are at liberty, and if your way lies past my house, do me the favour to come in for a short time. I must speak with you."

Khlobuyoff replied "Very well, Afanasiy Vasilievitch."

"What very beautiful weather we are having, Afanasiy Vasilievitch," said Tchitchikoff.

"Yes, are we not," interposed Vishnepokromoff. "It is quite unusual, surely."

"Yes, sir, thank God, it is not bad. But a little rain is required to allow of sowing."

"It is very, very much needed," responded Vishnepokromoff. "And it would be well for the hunting season also."

"Yes, a shower would do no harm," chimed in Tchitchikoff, who did not need any rain at all; but for some reason or other it is always pleasant to agree with a man who possesses millions.

"My head simply grows dizzy," said Tchitchikoff, when Murazoff went out, "at the thought that that man owns ten millions. It is simply incredible."

"The thing is monstrous," said Vishnepokromoff. "Capital ought not to be in the hands of a few. This is now the subject of treaties in every country of Europe. If you have any money, share it with your neighbour; entertain, give balls, indulge in beneficent luxury, which furnishes food to artisans and handicraftsmen."

"I cannot understand it," said Tchitchikoff. "Ten millions, and he lives like a simple moujik! The deuce only knows what might be done with those ten millions! It might be so employed that you would have no society lower than that of generals and princes."

"Yes, sir," added the shopman. "With all Afanasiy Vasilievitch's fine qualities, there is much that is uncultivated about him. If a merchant acquires honours he is no longer a merchant: he is already after a fashion a wholesale dealer. In those circumstances I should feel bound to take a box at the theatre, and I would not marry my daughter to a simple colonel: no, sir, I would wed her to a general. What's a colonel to me? And my dinner would be prepared by the confectioner, and not by the cook any longer."

"Well, what's the use of talking? Pray cease all this," said Vishnepokromoff. "What couldn't one do with ten millions? Only give me ten millions, and you would see what I would do!"

"No, no," thought Tchitchikoff: "much good you would do with ten millions. But if I only had ten millions, I would really accomplish something proper with them."

"Ah! if I had ten millions, after all these terrible experiences," said Khlobuyoff to himself. "Experience teaches one the value of every copeck. Eh! I am not now as I was." And after a moment's thought, he asked himself, "Would you really know how to manage your affairs now?" Then, with a show of his hand he added, "What the deuce! I believe that I would squander it now exactly as I did before!" And he quitted the shop, burning with curiosity to know what Murazoff had to say to him.

"I am waiting for you, Semyon Semyonovitch," said Murazoff to Khlobuyoff, as he entered the house. "Please come to my room." And he then led Khlobuyoff into his private room, and which was no more comfortable than that of an official who received a paltry salary of some six or seven hundred roubles a year.

"Pray tell me: I suppose you are in a little better circumstances

now? You have surely received something, now that your aunt is dead?"

"What am I to say to you, Afanasiy Vasilievitch? I do not know whether my circumstances are improved or not. I have received thirty thousand roubles, with which I must pay off a portion of my debts; and beyond that I have nothing whatever. But the principal point is that things are not just as they should be in connection with that will. There has been some rascality about it, Afanasiy Vasilievitch. I will tell you about it directly, and you will be amazed that such a transaction could take place. That Tchitchikoff—— "

"Excuse me, Semyon Semyonovitch; before talking of Tchitchikoff, permit me to speak about yourself. Tell me how much, according to your calculations, would be sufficient to set your affairs entirely to rights?"

"My affairs are in a very perplexing state," answered Khlobuyoff. "In order to straighten them out, pay off my debts, and be in a condition to live in the most modest manner, I should need one hundred thousand roubles, if not more."

"And if you had that, how would you order your life?"

"Well, I should take some inexpensive lodgings, and occupy myself with the education of my children. There is no use in thinking of myself; my career is ended, I am no longer good for anything."

"But your life will in that case remain an idle one; and in an idle life temptations arise which a man would never dream of when busy with work."

"I cannot; I am good for nothing; I have grown stupid and my loins pain me."

"But how can one live without work? How can one exist in the world without duties, without a place of one's own, pray? Look at every one of God's creatures. Every one of them has some service to perform, is of some use. Even a stone is created for use; and man, the most intelligent being of them all—is it possible that he should remain useless?"

"But I shall not be without occupation. I can attend to the education of my children."

"No, Semyon Semyonovitch, that is the hardest thing of all. How can you educate your children when you are not educated yourself? You can educate your children by the example of your own life. But is your life a fitting example for them? Is it well to teach them, for instance, to pass their time in idleness and in card-playing? No, Semyon Semyonovitch, give your children to me to take care of: you will spoil them. Think seriously of this matter: idleness has been your ruin—you must flee from it. How can you live in the world without attaching yourself to anything? Some duty must be fulfilled. Even a day-labourer serves a use. He eats coarse bread, but he earns it; and he takes an interest in his occupation."

"By heavens, Afanasiy Vasilievitch, I have tried, I have really made an effort to conquer myself! What am I to do? I have grown old, I have become unfitted for anything. Now, what can I do? Shall I enter the service? But how am I, at my age, to sit at one desk with the office-clerks who have just begun their career? Besides, I am incapable of accepting bribes; and hence I hinder my own advancement, and injure others. And they have their castes already formed. No, Afanasiy Vasilievitch, I have reflected, and I have tried, and I have meditated on all sorts of situations—and I am unfitted for any one of them. In the almshouse, perhaps."

"The almshouse is for those who have toiled; but to those who have passed their youth in merriment, one gives the answer which the ant gave to the grasshopper, 'Go, dance!' And those who live in the almshouse work also, and toil, and do not play at whist. Semyon Semyonovitch, you are deceiving both yourself and family."

So saying, Murazoff gazed intently into the other man's face; for poor Khlobuyoff could make no reply. Murazoff felt sorry for him.

"Listen, Semyon Semyonovitch," he resumed. "Surely you pray when you enter a church; you miss neither mass nor vespers, that I know. Although you do not like to rise early, still you do it, and you go—yes, you go to church at four o'clock in the morning, when no one else is up."

"That's another thing, Afanasiy Vasilievitch. I know that I am not doing that for man, but for Him who has commanded us all to exist on earth. But what of that? I believe that He is merciful to me; that, no matter how wretched and vile I may be, He will pardon and receive me when men repulse me with their feet, and when my best friend betrays me, and pretends that he betrayed me with a beneficent aim."

A look of bitterness came over Khlobuyoff's countenance; and Murazoff held his peace for a moment, as though to allow him to recover himself. Then he said, "Why do not you accept some duties, but not for the sake of man or for the gratification of society? Serve Him who is so merciful. Work is well-pleasing in His sight, as well as prayer. Engage in some occupation, but undertake it as though you were doing it for His sake, and not for that of man. Come, now, if you do but draw water in a sieve, just think that you are doing it for His sake. You will derive at least this profit from it—that you will have no time left to lose money at cards, to feast with parasites, and lounge your life away. Eh, Semyon Semyonovitch! Do you know Ivan Potapuich?"

"I know him, and respect him very deeply."

"Well, he was formerly a prosperous merchant. He had half a million. Everything which he looked at turned to profit, and he launched into large expenditure. He began to have his son taught French, and he married his daughter to a general. And

wherever he encountered a friend, whether in a shop or in the street of the exchange, he would drag him into a tavern; he feasted thus for days at a time, and finally became bankrupt. And then God sent a calamity upon him: his son died. And now, do you see? he is a clerk in my employ. He has made a fresh start. His affairs have righted themselves. He might again enter trade on a basis of five hundred thousand roubles. 'I have been a clerk, and as a clerk I wish to die. Now,' he says, 'I have become healthy and fresh; but formerly I had the bellyache, and dropsy was beginning to attack me. No more of it!' says he. And he never tastes tea now; all he eats is cabbage soup and oatmeal porridge—yes, sir. And he prays as not one of the rest of us does, and he helps the poor as none of the rest of us do. And I should be glad to assist another man who has squandered his money."

Poor Khlobuyoff became thoughtful.

The other man took him by both hands. "Semyon Semyonovitch," said he, "if you only knew how sorry I am for you! I think of you constantly. Now listen to me. You are aware that, in the monastery, there is a hermit whom no one sees. This man is possessed of great wisdom—of more wisdom, sir, than anyone whom I know. Now, he can give proper advice. I once began to tell him that I had a certain friend—but I will not mention his name—and that he was suffering from such and such a cause. He began by listening to my talk; but all at once he interrupted me with the words, 'God's business takes the precedence of your own. There are churches to be built, and there is no money to do it; money must be collected for the churches!' And then he clapped to the door. 'What does that mean?' I thought to myself. Evidently he did not mean to impart any advice, so I went to our archimandrite. No sooner had I entered the door, than the first words he addressed to me were in the form of an inquiry: did not I know of some man to whom could be intrusted the task of making a collection for the churches? He must belong to the gentry or merchant class, must be better educated than the average, and must regard the work as his salvation. I instantly paused. 'Ah, good heavens! why, the hermit meant to designate Semyon Semyonovitch for this task! The remedy is adapted to his disease. By dint of going about with a book under his arm, from landed proprietor to peasant, from peasant to petty tradesman, he will learn how each class lives, and who stands in need of what—so that when he returns, after having made the tour of several governments, he will understand the ground and the country far better than all the people who dwell in towns.' And such men are needed now. Here a certain prince informs me that he would give a great deal to get hold of a man who really knows affairs, not from papers, but as they really are; for, as he says, nothing can be gathered from papers, everything is so involved."

"You have utterly confused and overcome me, Afanasiy Vasilievitch," said Khlobuyoff, as he gazed in amazement at Murazoff. "I actually cannot believe that you are saying this to me. For your purpose you require an active man, of unwearied energy; and moreover, how can I desert my wife and children?"

"You must feel no anxiety with regard to your wife and children. I take them under my own protection, and teachers shall be provided for the children. If you are willing to go about with double pouches, begging alms for yourself, it is much more noble to do so for God. I will give you a simple kibitka: do not be afraid of being jolted; it will be of benefit to your health. I will furnish you with money for the journey, so that as you go along, you may give to those who stand most in need of it. In this way you can do a great deal of good. You must make no mistake; those to whom you give must be worthy persons. By travelling about in this manner, you will make the acquaintance of every sort of individual, and you will learn how each one lives. This is not the same thing as being an official whom everyone fears, but in your case, knowing that you are collecting for the Church, they will talk freely."

"I perceive that it is a very beautiful scheme, and I should be very glad to have a share in it; but it really seems to me as though it were beyond my powers."

"Well, what is within your powers?" said Murazoff. "There is nothing within our powers; everything is beyond our powers. Nothing is possible without aid from on high. Prayer concentrates the faculties. A man crosses himself, and says, 'Lord, have mercy!' then he rows on, and reaches the shore. One must not pause long to think of this; it is merely necessary to cling blindly to God. The kibitka will be ready for you immediately; and you must run to the father archimandrite for the book and his blessing, and then set out on your journey."

"I will obey you, and I will accept this as the command of God; and may the Lord give me his blessing!" thought Khlobuyoff, as he felt strength and alertness beginning to permeate his soul. His very brain seemed to be stimulated with the hope of escape from his sad and inextricable predicament. Light began to glimmer in the distance.

"And now, permit me to ask you," said Murazoff, "what sort of a man is that Tchitchikoff?"

"I can tell you incredible things about Tchitchikoff. He is engaged in such transactions—well, do you know, Afanasiy Vasilievitch, that will was certainly forged? The real one has been found—one in which my aunt bequeaths all the property to her lady companions, whom she brought up."

"You don't say so! Then, who fabricated the forged will?"

"That is the very point, and a most revolting business it is. They say that Tchitchikoff did it, and that the will was signed after the testator's death. They dressed up some woman to

represent the dead woman, and that person signed it. In short, the affair is of the most rascally description. A thousand appeals have poured in from all quarters; wooers are now flocking to Marya Yeremyevna, who personated the deceased. Indeed two official personages are now quarrelling over her. That's the sort of a business it is, Afanasiy Vasilievitch."

"I have heard nothing about this, but there really is something wrong about the matter. I will admit that Pavel Ivanovitch Tchitchikoff is to me an extremely repulsive man," said Murazoff.

"I have also filed an appeal, in order to remind the officials that an immediate heir is in existence. They may all fight it out among themselves, so far as I am concerned," thought Khlobuyoff, as he left the house. "Afanasiy Vasilievitch is no fool. He probably thought the matter over before he intrusted this commission to me. All I have to do is to fulfil it."

He had already begun to meditate on his journey, while Murazoff was still repeating, "Pavel Ivanovitch Tchitchikoff is to me an extremely repulsive man. If he would only display the same perseverance and force of will in a good cause!"

In the meantime, appeal after appeal had been presented to the court. Relatives who had never been heard of before made their appearance. As birds of prey swoop down upon a corpse, so everyone swooped down upon the immense heritage left by the old woman. Denunciations against Tchitchikoff, against the fraudulent will; complaints as to the fraudulent character of the first will as well; charges of theft, and of the concealment of various sums; charges against Tchitchikoff in connection with his purchase of dead souls, and of his introduction of smuggled goods during his service in the custom-house—had already been brought forward.

Everything had been ferreted out, and his former history was generally known. God alone knows how people had got scent of his history, and had unearthed the whole of it! But there were proofs, even with regard to such matters as Tchitchikoff supposed to be known to himself and to the four walls only. All this was a judicial secret for the present, and had not yet reached his ears; although a confidential note from his lawyer, which he received before long, gave him to understand that there was trouble brewing. This note was couched in brief terms: "I hasten to inform you that your business will create a stir, but remember that you are not to feel anxious. The chief thing is—composure. We will settle it all." This note entirely reassured him. "That man is a real genius!" said Tchitchikoff.

To complete his pleasant frame of mind, the tailor brought home his new suit just at this time. He conceived a strong desire to have a look at himself in his new coat of Navarino smoke and flame; he tightly buckled his trousers, which fitted him wonderfully well in every respect, so that he was a perfect picture. The cloth moulded itself to his hips and calves; it set

snugly to his whole form, thereby communicating still greater elasticity to it. When he drew the strap close behind, his stomach seemed just like a drum. He immediately smote it with a brush, and said, "What a fool! but, on the whole, it forms a picture." It appeared that the coat was even better made than the trousers: there was not a single wrinkle; all the parts stretched smoothly, curving outward over the rounding portions of his body, and defining the hollows.

The tailor merely smiled at Tchitchikoff's remark, that it pinched him a little under his left arm: it set all the better round the waist for that, said he. "Be at your ease, be at your ease, as regards the work," he kept repeating with unconcealed triumph. "Things are made so nowhere else outside of Petersburg." The tailor was from Petersburg himself; and on his sign he had inscribed, *From London and Paris*. He was not fond of jesting, and his object in employing the names of these two cities was to close the throats of all other tailors on the spot, so that, in the future, no one should present himself as coming from those cities, but might set himself down as from some Carlsruhe or Copenhagen.

Tchitchikoff settled his debt to the tailor in handsome style; and when he was alone once more, he began to survey himself at his leisure in the mirror, like an artist possessed of an æsthetic sense, and *con amore*. Everything seemed more satisfactory than before: his cheeks were more interesting, his chin was more captivating, his white collar imparted tone to his cheeks, his blue satin neckcloth imparted tone to his collar, the new-fangled plaits of his shirt-front gave tone to his neckcloth, his rich velvet waistcoat gave value to his shirt-front, and his swallow-tailed coat of Navarino smoke and flame, which was as glossy as silk, heightened the effect of all the rest.

He turned to the right—good! He turned to the left—better still! He bent forward as though in the house of a court-chamberlain, or of a gentleman who even scratches himself in the French style, and who, even when angry, never disgraces himself by an unclean word in the Russian language, but curses in the French dialect. Such delicacy!

Inclining his head a little on one side, he tried to strike an attitude as though in the act of addressing a lady of middle age, and of the highest cultivation. The attitude turned out a perfect picture. Artist, take your brush, and limn it! In his satisfaction he executed a little skip in the nature of a caper. The table trembled; and a glass bottle containing *eau-de-Cologne* fell to the floor; but this occasioned him no dismay.

He simply called the stupid bottle a "fool," and was thinking, "To whom shall I show myself first? The best thing of all will be"—when suddenly there became audible in the ante-room a clanking resembling that produced by boots and spurs, and a gendarme entered in full uniform, and with a look on his face

as though he were a whole army in himself. "You are ordered to present yourself instantly to the governor-general," said he. Tchitchikoff was stunned. Before him towered a bearded scarecrow, with a horse-tail on his head, a cross-belt over one shoulder, another cross-belt over the other, and a huge sword suspended at his side. It seemed to Tchitchikoff that a gun and the deuce knows what besides was suspended from his other side. There was indeed a whole army contained in this one individual, and what an army! He attempted to make some reply; but the scarecrow interrupted him roughly, "You are to come with me immediately."

On glancing through the doorway into the ante-room, Tchitchikoff caught a glimpse of another scarecrow; then he cast a glance through the window: there was a carriage in the court-yard. What was to be done? He was forced to seat himself just as he was, coat of Navarino smoke and flame and all, in the equipage; and, trembling in every limb, he was driven to the governor-general's, and the gendarme with him. They did not even allow him time to recover himself in the ante-room. "Step up! The prince is waiting for you," said the official who was on duty. The ante-room, filled with couriers who had received their packets, flashed past him as in a mist: then came a hall, through which he passed with but one thought, "This is the way one is seized, without a hearing or any formality, and sent to Siberia!" His heart beat with such violence as even that of the most sincere lover is incapable of. At length a door opened, a study filled with portfolios, book-cases, and books presented itself before him, and the prince stood there, as angry as wrath personified.

"My destroyer, my destroyer!" said Tchitchikoff to himself. "He will cut my throat as the wolf tears that of the lamb."

"I have spared you, I have permitted you to remain free in the city when you should have been in prison; but you have again sullied yourself with the most dishonourable villainy with which a man ever disgraced himself!"

The prince's lips quivered with anger.

"With what dishonourable deed and villainy does your excellency charge me?" inquired Tchitchikoff, trembling in every limb.

"The woman," said the prince, stepping a little closer, and looking Tchitchikoff straight in the eye, "the woman who signed that will, at your dictation, has been apprehended; and you will be confronted with her."

The world grew dark before the eyes of Tchitchikoff, who turned as pale as a sheet.

"Your excellency, I will tell you the real truth of that matter. I am guilty, yes, guilty, but not so guilty My enemies have betrayed me."

"No one can betray you, for the rascality within you is many times greater than the most abandoned liar could even conceive

of. I don't believe that you have ever done a thing in your life which was not dishonourable. Every copeck that you have acquired has been acquired by the most dishonourable means, and by robbery, and the most disgraceful sort of transactions, which deserve the knout and Siberia. No, there has been enough of this. You will be conveyed this instant to prison; and there, on a level with the vilest of men and with thieves, you will await the judgment on your case. And this is but a slight punishment, for you are far worse than those who are clad in armyaks* and sheepskin coats; for you——" Here he glanced at the coat of Navarino smoke and flame, and, seizing the bell-cord, he rang vigorously.

"Your excellency," cried Tchitchikoff, "have mercy! You are the father of a family: spare me, for the sake of my aged mother!"

"You lie!" exclaimed the prince angrily. "You besought me once in the name of your children and of the wife which you never had, and now it is for the sake of your mother."

"Your excellency, I am a wretch, and the vilest of good-for-nothings," said Tchitchikoff. "I really have lied; I really had no wife and children; but God is my witness that I have always wanted to have a wife, to fulfil the duties of a man and a citizen, in order hereafter to actually merit the respect of my fellow-citizens and of the authorities. But how inauspicious has been the course of circumstances! Your highness, I have been forced to win an existence at the cost of my blood. At every step I have encountered deceit and temptation—enemies, corrupters, and robbers. My whole life has been like a stormy tempest, or like a vessel amid the billows, at the mercy of the gale. I am a man, your excellency——"

Tears suddenly streamed in torrents from his eyes. He flung himself at the prince's feet, just as he was, in his coat of Navarino smoke and flame, his velvet waistcoat, his blue satin neckcloth, his wonderfully well-made trousers, and pressed his brow to the floor, while his finely arranged hair exhaled a sweet scent of *eau-de-Cologne* of the first quality.

"Get away from me! Call a soldier to take him away!" said the prince to the man who entered.

"Your excellency!" shrieked Tchitchikoff, clasping the prince's boot with both arms.

"Go away, I tell you!" said the prince, striving to extricate his leg from Tchitchikoff's embrace.

"Your excellency, I will not stir from this spot until you grant me mercy," said Tchitchikoff, not releasing the prince's boot, but pressing it close to his breast, and making his way across the floor, coat of Navarino smoke and flame included, in company with the boot.

"Leave, I tell you!" repeated the prince, with the same

* Long peasant-cloaks.

inexplicable sensation of disgust which a man experiences at the sight of some repulsive insect which he cannot bring himself to crush under foot. He shook himself so violently, that Tchitchikoff felt the shock of the prince's foot upon his nose, his lips, and his rounded chin. But he did not relax his hold upon the boot, he even clasped the leg in his embrace with renewed energy. Two stalwart gendarmes dragged him away by main force, bound his arms, and then led him through all the apartments. He was pale and worn, and in that condition of nervous terror in which a man finds himself when he sees before him black, inevitable death, that bugbear which is so repellent to our natures.

At the very door opening upon the staircase Murazoff met him. A ray of hope suddenly flashed through his mind. In an instant, by the exercise of supernatural strength, he had torn himself from the hands of the two gendarmes, and had flung himself at the feet of the astounded old man.

"My friend, Pavel Ivanovitch, what is the matter with you?" exclaimed Murazoff.

"Save me! They are leading me to prison—to my death." However, the gendarmes seized him and carried him off, without allowing him to complete his sentence.

A damp and musty attic filled with the odour of the boots and foot-bandages of the soldiers of the garrison, an unpainted table, two miserable chairs, a window with an iron grating, a worthless stove, through whose cracks the smoke emerged, but which gave out no heat, such were the quarters where Tchitchikoff, in his fine new coat of Navarino smoke and flame, was lodged, before he had begun to taste the sweets of life and to attract the attention of his contemporaries. He had not been allowed to make any preparations, or even to take the most indispensable articles with him. His dressing-case, where his money was kept, his papers, his deeds of sale respecting the dead souls—everything now was in the hands of the authorities. He flung himself on the floor: hopeless sorrow, like a carnivorous worm, coiled itself about his heart. With ever-increasing swiftness did it begin to devour this heart, which was wholly unprotected. One day more, only one day more of such anguish, and Tchitchikoff would have utterly ceased to exist on this earth! But some one's all-saving hand had not been idle in Tchitchikoff's affairs. An hour later the door of his prison was flung open. Old Murazoff entered.

If some person had poured fresh water from a spring into the parched throat of a weary and fainting traveller tortured with thirst, and covered with the dust and dirt of the road, he would not have strengthened and refreshed the wayfarer to such an extent as this visit revivified our hero.

"My saviour!" he exclaimed, suddenly springing from the floor, upon which he had thrown himself in his outburst of grief; and grasping Murazoff's hand, he kissed it quickly, and pressed

it to his bosom. "May God reward you for having thus visited an unhappy wretch!"

He burst into tears.

The old man gazed at him with a look of pain and compassion, and said, "Ah, Pavel, Pavel Ivanovitch! Pavel Ivanovitch, what have you done?"

"What was there for me to do? That accursed lack of judgment as to measure overtook me, and I had not sense enough to pause in time. Satan, the accursed, beguiled me, led me beyond the bounds of reason and of human calculations. I have sinned, I have sinned! But how could they behave in that manner? To throw a nobleman, a nobleman, into prison without a hearing, without even an investigation! A nobleman, Afanasiy Vasilievitch! And why did not they allow me time to go to my quarters, to arrange my affairs? Now everything that belongs to me is left without anyone to take care of it. My dressing-case, Afanasiy Vasilievitch! my dressing-case! It contains my entire property. I won it by the sweat of my brow, by my blood, by years of toil, by privation. My dressing-case, Afanasiy Vasilievitch! Everything will be stolen—carried off! O God!"

And, powerless to control the anguish which attacked his very heart, he sobbed aloud in a voice which pierced the thick walls of his prison, and resounded dully in the distance: he snatched off his satin neckcloth, and, seizing his coat of Navarino flame and smoke by the collar, he tore it off.

"Ah, Pavel Ivanovitch, how these riches have blinded you! They prevent your realising your terrible situation."

"My benefactor, my saviour, save me!" cried poor Pavel Ivanovitch, throwing himself at Murazoff's feet. "The prince loves you: he will do anything for you."

"No, Pavel Ivanovitch, I cannot, much as I should wish and like to do it. You have fallen under an inexorable law, and not under the power of any man."

"That rascal of a Satan, that outcast of the human race, has ruined me!" So saying, Tchitchikoff dashed his head against the wall, and struck the table with his fist, so that he wounded it till it bled; but he felt neither the pain in his head nor the violence of the blow.

"Calm yourself, Pavel Ivanovitch; reflect how you may make your peace with God, and not with men; think of your miserable soul."

"But what a fate, Afanasiy Vasilievitch! Did such a fate ever overtake any other man? I amassed my copecks patiently—with bloody patience, I may say, with toil, with toil; and I have never cheated men, nor robbed the treasury, as many do. Why did I amass copecks? In order to be able to pass the remnant of my days in comfort, to leave them to the wife and children whom I intended to acquire for my salvation, for the service

of my country. That is why I wanted to amass money. I have gone astray; I do not deny it, I have gone astray; but what could I do? I only went astray when I saw that nothing was to be won by following the straight road, and that the crooked ways were more profitable. But I have ever toiled and stinted myself. If I have taken anything it has been from the wealthy. But see those scoundrels in the departments of justice who steal thousands from the treasury, who rob the poor, who squeeze the last copeck from those who have nothing. What a misfortune this is! Tell me why it is, that every time that you begin to reap the fruits of your labour, and to touch them with your hand, so to speak, there suddenly arises a tempest, or you run aground on a reef beneath the water, and the whole ship is dashed into splinters? Here I had a capital of thirty thousand roubles; I also had a three-storey house; on two occasions I purchased a village. Ah, Afanasiy Vasilievitch, why are these blows dealt to me? Was not my life already like a bark among the billows? Where is the justice of Heaven? Where is the reward for patience, for unexampled perseverance? Three times have I begun afresh, after having lost everything. I began again with a copeck, when any other man would long before have taken to drink in despair, and have ruined himself in the dram-shop. Consider how much I have had to contend with, how much to endure! Why, every copeck has been wrung out of me, so to speak, with all the powers of my soul. Some other man might have acquired a fortune with ease, but with me it has only been by dint of great exertion."

He sobbed loudly with insufferable torture of heart, fell upon a chair, completely tore off the skirt of his coat, which was hanging in shreds, flung it away from him, and thrusting both hands into his hair, over the improvement of which he had formerly taken so much pains, he tore it out remorselessly, enjoying the pain by which he strove to deaden the unquenchable torture of his heart.

For a long time Murazoff sat silent before him, gazing at this remarkable exhibition of madness, which was something that he had never hitherto witnessed. This fellow, who had not long ago been fluttering about with the easy agility of a man of the world or an officer, was now flinging himself wildly about in a soiled, torn, and rumpled waistcoat and unbuttoned trousers, with a hand bleeding from the blow which he had dealt it, and pouring out invectives on the hostile powers which attend upon mankind.

"Ah, Pavel Ivanovitch, Pavel Ivanovitch!" said Murazoff. "What a man you might have been if you had but exerted yourself with this same force and perseverance in the proper direction, with a better aim in view! Great heavens! how much good you might have accomplished! If one of the people who love good had only expended as much power in its behalf as you have expended in acquiring copecks, and had understood how to sacrifice his own self-love and ambition for good without sparing

himself, as you have not spared yourself for the sake of amassing money, my God, how this earth of ours would have blossomed out! Pavel Ivanovitch, Pavel Ivanovitch! the pity of it is not that you have been guilty towards others, but that you have been false to yourself, to the rich powers and talents with which you were endowed. You were intended to be a great man, but you have been the cause of your own loss and ruin."

No matter how far the incorrigible criminal may have strayed from the path in his wanderings, no matter how hardened his feelings may have become, no matter how he may have persisted in and clung to his life of corruption, yet if you approach him with the very qualities which he has discredited, his soul involuntarily awakens, and quivers in every fibre.

"Afanasiy Vasilievitch," said Tchitchikoff, and he seized Murazoff's hand in both of his, "oh, if you could only contrive to set me free, to restore my property to me, I swear to you that I would henceforth lead a wholly different life. Save me, my benefactor, save me!"

"What can I do? I must in that case war against the laws. Suppose that I *were* to bring myself to that; however, the prince is a just man; he would not release you."

"My benefactor, you can do anything! The law does not terrify me. I could find means of coping with the law: what troubles me is, that I have been cast into prison, that I shall perish here like a dog, and that my property, my papers, my dressing-case—— Ah! Save me!"

He embraced the old man's feet, and burst into tears.

"Ah, Pavel Ivanovitch, Pavel Ivanovitch!" said old Murazoff, shaking his head, "how this property has blinded you! For its sake you refuse to listen to your poor soul."

"I will think of my soul; only save me!"

"Pavel Ivanovitch," said old Murazoff, impressively, "it is not within my power to save you. You see that yourself. But I will exert myself so far as I can to lighten your fate and to have you set at liberty. I do not know whether I shall succeed in effecting this, but I will try. But in case I should succeed beyond my expectations, I shall claim a reward for my labour, Pavel Ivanovitch. Cast aside all these efforts to acquire wealth. I say to you in serious earnest, that if I were to lose all my money —and I have more than you—I should not weep over it. No, no; the point does not lie in the property of which others may deprive me, but in that which no one can confiscate or steal away from me. You have already lived a tolerably long time in the world. You yourself style your life a bark amid the billows. You already have enough to live upon for the remainder of your days. Settle down in some retired spot, near a church and among good simple people; or, if you are anxious to leave descendants behind you, marry some good young girl who is not rich, but who is accustomed to a modest way of living;

forget this noisy world and all its seductive caprices, and let it forget you. There is no rest to be had in it. You see how it is : everyone in it is an enemy, a tempter, or a traitor."

"Certainly, certainly. I had already formally intended to order my life in accordance with the requirements of my soul, to occupy myself with the management of my estate, to live a quiet life, in fact. The tempter Satan, yes, the Devil and his crew, turned me from the path and beguiled me."

Some hidden and hitherto unknown feelings now revealed themselves within our hero, as though something remote, something which had been dropped into his mind long before, which had been stifled since his childhood by stern and deadly precepts, by the unpropitious conditions of his wearisome boyhood, by the dreariness of his paternal home, by the changeless isolation, poverty, and misery of his earliest impressions, by the gloomy views of fate which peered sadly at him through a dim window-pane, obscured by the snowstorms of winter, was desirious of awaking.

A groan burst from his lips, and, covering his face with both hands, he exclaimed in a sorrowful voice, "It is true, it is true!"

"Neither your knowledge of mankind nor your experience availed, since the foundation of your fortune was unlawful. But if there had been a lawful foundation. Ah, Pavel Ivanovitch! why have you ruined yourself? Awake! it is not too late ; perhaps there may still be time."

"No, it is too late, too late!" groaned Tchitchikoff in a voice which nearly broke Murazoff's heart. "I begin to feel, I am conscious, that it is not thus, not thus, that I shall go—that I have wandered very far from the right road ; but I can do nothing now. No, not thus was I brought up. My father inculcated righteousness, he beat it into me : he made me copy moral precepts, while he himself stole a forest from a neighbour in my presence, and forced me to assist him in the deed. He entered into an unjust lawsuit, and I knew it ; he corrupted a young girl who was an orphan and his ward. Example is stronger than precept. I see, I feel, Afanasiy Vasilievitch, that I am not leading the right sort of life, but no one could have a greater repugnance for vice. My nature has grown coarse ; I have not that love for good, those fine impulses for deeds of benevolence, which are formed by habit ; I have not as great a desire to do battle for the good as for the acquisition of wealth. I am telling you the truth. Ah! what am I to do?"

The old man sighed.

"Pavel Ivanovitch, you possess as much strength of will as patience," said he. "Medicine is bitter ; but the sick man takes it, knowing that otherwise he will not recover. You have no love for the good : do good by main force, without any love for it. This will be accounted a greater merit in your case than in the case of a man who does good for the love of it. Only force yourself to do it a few times and you will acquire a love

for it. Believe me, everything proceeds in this manner. We have been told that the 'kingdom of heaven is taken by force.' Only by force can we come near to it, and by force it is necessary to lay hold of it. Eh, Pavel Ivanovitch! surely you possess that strength, that iron patience which is not possessed by others, and can you not conquer? Yes, it seems to me that you could prove a *bogatuir*.* For all men are now lacking in will, all are weak."

It was evident that these words penetrated into Tchitchikoff's inmost soul, and touched something egotistical at the bottom of it. Decision, or some powerful emotion which resembled it, gleamed in his eyes.

"Afanasiy Vasilievitch," said he firmly, "if you will only procure my release, and the means of departing hence with some property, I will give you my word that I will begin a different life. I will purchase a village, I will become a good manager; I will amass money, not for myself, but for the purpose of assisting others; I will do good, so far as lies within my power; I will forget myself, and all the dainties and feasts of the city; I will lead a simple and sober life."

"May God strengthen you in that determination!" said the delighted old man. "I shall exert my utmost powers to beg your freedom from the prince. Whether I shall succeed or not, God alone knows. In any case, your fate will certainly be ameliorated. Ah, good heavens, embrace me! Permit me to embrace you! How truly you have rejoiced my heart! Now God be with you! I shall go straight to the prince."

Then Tchitchikoff was left alone. His whole nature had been shaken to its depths, and thoroughly softened. Even platinum, the hardest of metals, and the one which resists the fire longer than all the rest, melts at last; when the fire is increased in the furnace, and the bellows blow upon it, and the heat of the flames attains to an intolerable pitch, then the most stubborn of metal blanches, and is converted into a liquid; and so the strongest miseries of mental torture yield, when intolerable fires consume a nature which has grown for a season hardened.

"I have no feelings myself," soliloquised our hero. "I feel nothing, but I will exert all my powers to cause others to feel; I am evil and worthless myself, but I will use all my strength to convert others to goodness; I am but a poor Christian myself, but I will strain every nerve in order that I may give no cause for offence. I will work, I will toil in the sweat of my brow. In the village I will conduct myself honestly, in order that I may have a good influence on others. Why, after all, should I regard myself as an utter castaway? I have capacity for the management of an estate; I possess the qualities of economy and skill, and good sense, and even of perseverance. All that is necessary is to make up my mind to it."

After this fashion did Tchitchikoff meditate, and he seemed

* A hero of the ancient epic songs of Russia.

to be testing the half-awakened powers of his soul. It seemed as though his nature were becoming aware in a dim groping way that there is some duty which must be fulfilled in every situation, in every nook, however remote, despite all the perplexities and disturbances which hover round a man in every position in which he may be placed. And a laborious life, far removed from the uproar of cities, and from those seductions which man has devised in his idleness, unmindful of toil, began to outline itself so distinctly before him, that he almost forgot the unpleasantness of his predicament, and was even prepared to return thanks to providence for that heavy blow if he might regain his liberty and a portion of his—— However, at this moment the door of his noisome prison opened, and an official personage entered—Samosvistoff, an epicurean, a clever fellow, with shoulders an arshin* broad, and huge feet, a capital companion, a roisterer, and a thorough brute, as even his comrades expressed themselves in regard to him. In times of war this man would have wrought wonders had he been despatched to make his way through some impenetrable perilous place, to crawl in under the very mouths of the enemy's cannon: it would have been the very work for him. After having missed a military career, which might have made an honest man of him, he had set all his powers to the task of rendering himself as vile as possible. And, incredible to state, he possessed extraordinary convictions and principles; he behaved well with his comrades, never betrayed any of them, and having given his word, he kept it; but as for the official personages of a higher rank than his own, he regarded them in the light of a hostile battery, through which it behoved him to make his way, taking advantage of every weak spot, of every breach, of all lack of watchfulness.

"I know all about your situation: I have heard everything," he said, when he saw that the door was closed behind him. "Have no fears, none; all will be set right. Everybody has set to work on your behalf, and we are all at your service. Thirty thousand will suffice for all, not a rouble more."

"Done!" exclaimed Tchitchikoff. "And shall I be set completely at liberty?"

"Completely. You will even receive compensation for your losses."

"And for the trouble?"

"Thirty thousand roubles. That is for all of us—our people, the governor-general, and his secretary."

"But excuse me, how can I? All my effects, my dressing-case, and the rest, are now under seal, under supervision."

"You will receive everything an hour hence. Shall we strike hands on the bargain?"

Tchitchikoff gave his hand. His heart beat fast and he could not believe that this was possible.

* Twenty-eight inches.

"Farewell for the present. I was commissioned by our mutual friend to tell you that the principal thing is—composure, and presence of mind."

"H'm!" thought Tchitchikoff: "I understand; the lawyer."

Thereupon Samosvistoff disappeared. Tchitchikoff, left alone once more, had not yet succeeded in believing his words, when an hour later, his dressing-case and papers were brought to him, and what is more, in the very best of order. Samosvistoff played the part of director; he scolded the sentinels posted at our hero's house for their heedlessness; he inspected them, and ordered application to be made for extra soldiers, so that the guard might be strengthened. Then he seized not only the dressing-case, but all the documents which could in any way compromise Tchitchikoff. Having made them all up into a package together, he sealed it and ordered a soldier to take it to Tchitchikoff, under the pretence that it consisted of indispensable articles for his toilet. Indeed, Tchitchikoff received together with his papers, all the warm clothing which was necessary for covering his delicate body. This change of matters rejoiced him unspeakably. He conceived strong hopes, and he again began to dream of luxuries, of evenings spent at the theatre, and of a ballet-girl whom he was courting. The country and a quiet life began to lose all charms for him; the city and its tumult were more brilliant and seductive. Oh, life!

However, in the meantime, the matter had assumed unheard of proportions in the court and council-chamber. The pens of the scribes laboured away, while the scribes themselves took snuff and admired their flourishing caligraphy. The lawyer, like a hidden magician, guided the entire mechanism: he thoroughly confused them all before any of them had succeeded in looking into the matter. The imbroglios augmented. Samosvistoff also excelled himself in audacity and in incredible daring. On learning where the woman who had been captured was kept under guard, he straightway presented himself there with such a dashing and authoritative air, that the sentry saluted him, and dropped his hand to the seam of his trousers.

"Have you been standing here long?" asked Samosvistoff.

"Ever since the morning, your honour; it will be three hours before I shall be relieved, your honour."

"I require your services. I shall tell the officer to despatch another man in your place."

"I obey you, your honour!"

Then proceeding home, in order not to initiate anyone else into the affair, Samosvistoff dressed himself up like a gendarme, completing his disguise with moustache and side-whiskers. The Devil himself would not have recognised him. He then started off for the house where Tchitchikoff was confined, and seizing the first woman whom he encountered, he gave her in charge to two official youngsters, who were also sharp

practitioners. Then he presented himself with his moustaches and a gun, as the case required, to the sentinel. "Go!" said he, "the commander has sent me to take your duty."

While the exchange was effected Samosvistoff took up his stand with his gun. This was all that was required. Meanwhile the woman who had personated the dead aunt had been replaced by another, who neither knew nor remembered anything. The former was then concealed in such a manner that indeed it was never known what had become of her.

At the very time when Samosvistoff was transforming himself into the semblance of a warrior, the lawyer was working wonders in civil circles. The governor was given to understand indirectly that the procurator was preparing a complaint about him; the commandant of the gendarmes was informed that an official who had been living privately in town was writing a denunciation of him; the official who had been living privately was told that there was another and still more mysterious official personage, who was lodging information against him; and all of them were placed in such a position, that they were forced to resort to the lawyer for advice. This was the utter nonsense which resulted: denunciation followed upon denunciation, and such things were on the point of being divulged as no one had ever heard of before, and which, in point of fact, had never had any existence at all. Every sort of device was employed in the work, and brought to bear on the matter: one man was stated to be an illegitimate son, and his birth and name were revealed; another was declared to have a mistress; while the name of a man whom the wife of another was pursuing was also made known.

Scandal, offence, and every sort of element were so intermingled and intertwined with Tchitchikoff's affair, and his dead souls, that it was utterly impossible to decide in any manner whatever which of these matters was the most nonsensical. When the papers at length began to attack the governor-general, the poor prince could make nothing of them. An exceedingly clever and sensible official to whom the preparation of the abstract report was entrusted came near losing his mind. It was absolutely impossible by any means whatever to grasp the thread of the imbroglio. The prince moreover was at that time troubled about a multitude of other matters, each more annoying than the other. Famine had made its appearance in one quarter of the government. The officials who had been sent there to distribute bread had not taken the proper measures. In another quarter of the government, the *Raskolniki** had been making a stir. Someone had circulated among them a report that Antichrist

* When the Patriarch Nikon, about the middle of the seventeenth century, had the sacred writings revised, and the numerous errors which had crept in through the carelessness of scribes (and otherwise) corrected, some people still clung to the old and faulty versions; and thus the sect of the *Raskolniki*, or "Old Believers," came into existence.

had been born, and that he gave the dead no peace, for he had been collecting their souls. The Raskolniki then howled and made accusations; and under the pretext of catching Antichrist, they slew peaceable folks.

In another locality, the peasants had revolted against the proprietors and the members of the rural police. Some vagabonds had circulated a rumour among them to the effect that the time was approaching when the peasants were to become landowners themselves, and array themselves in swallow-tailed coats, while the gentry would be clothed in blouses and become peasants; and without reflecting on the fact that in that case there would be far too many landowners, the entire district refused to pay any taxes whatever to the rural police. It became necessary to resort to forcible measures. The poor prince was in the most distracted state of mind conceivable. It was at such a time as this that he was visited by Murazoff, the farmer of the brandy revenues. "Let him enter," said the prince. Thereupon the old man made his appearance.

"See what your Tchitchikoff has come to," said the prince. "You stood up for him, and defended him. Now he has involved himself in a transaction such as the vilest of thieves would not have dabbled in."

"Permit me to observe to your excellency that I do not understand this matter very well."

"He has forged a will, and has done other things besides. He deserves public chastisement with the whip for such misdeeds."

"Your excellency—I do not say this with the object of defending Tchitchikoff—but surely all this has not been proved as yet. No investigation has yet been made."

"There are proofs. The woman who was dressed up to represent the dead woman has been arrested. I intend to interrogate her expressly in your presence."

The prince then rang, and gave orders that the woman in question should be summoned. Murazoff held his peace.

"It is a most disgraceful affair," resumed his excellency, "and to their shame be it said, the most prominent officials in the city are mixed up in it, even the civil governor himself. He ought not to be where thieves and rascals congregate," said the prince wrathfully.

"Why, the civil governor is the heir* to the deceased's property; he has a right to be connected with the matter; but it is only natural, your excellency, that others should have interfered on all sides. A rich woman has died; she has not made a just and reasonable disposition of her property; persons desirous of enriching themselves have flown here from all quarters —that is all human nature."

"But why commit villainies? The scamps!" said the prince

* Lyenitzuin had now become the civil governor.

with a feeling of indignation. "I have not a single honourable official about me: they are all rogues!"

"Well, your excellency, which of us is as good as he ought to be? All the officials of our city are—men; but they have their merits, and many of them are extremely well informed as to their business. On the other hand, everyone is liable to sin."

"Listen, Afanasiy Vasilievitch; tell me—you are the only honest man whom I know—why have you such a passion for defending every sort of rascal?"

"Your excellency," answered Murazoff, "whoever the man may be whom you designate as a rascal, he is still a man. How can I help defending a person when I know that half the evil which he does proceeds from coarseness and ignorance? Surely we commit injustice at every step, and are at every instant the cause of the misery of a fellow-creature, even when we have no evil intentions. You also have certainly been guilty of great injustice."

"What!" exclaimed the prince in amazement, thoroughly astounded by the unexpected turn which the conversation had taken.

Murazoff remained silent for a moment, as though pondering, but he finally said, "Well, in the case of Derpennikoff, for instance."

"Afanasiy Vasilievitch, that was a crime against the fundamental laws of the empire: it was tantamount to a betrayal of one's native land."

"I do not seek to justify him. But is it just to condemn a young fellow who has been betrayed and led astray by others, by reason of his youth? is it just to condemn him exactly as though he had been one of the ringleaders? The same fate overtook Derpennikoff and a certain Voronnoi-Dryannoi, but their crimes were certainly not identical."

"For heaven's sake," rejoined the prince, with perceptible emotion, "do you know anything about that matter? Tell me; it was only recently that I wrote direct to Petersburg in reference to a mitigation of Derpennikoff's punishment."

"No, your excellency, I did not refer to that. I know nothing more about the matter than you do. Although there certainly does exist one circumstance which might be used to Derpennikoff's advantage, only he himself will not consent to utilise it, because another would be made to suffer thereby. I was merely thinking whether you had not been over-hasty on that occasion. But pardon me, your excellency; I only judge according to my weak understanding. You have several times enjoined upon me the duty of expressing myself frankly. When I was a master over men, I had a great many labourers of all sorts, both good and bad; now, when a peasant has misbehaved himself, if you do not take special circumstances and the man's former life into

consideration, if you do not inquire coolly into every particular, you never attain to any real comprehension of the matter; whereas, if you question him as a brother might question a brother, he will at once tell you everything of his own accord. He will not even ask for mercy, nor will he cherish any hard feelings towards anyone, for he will perceive clearly that it is not you, but the law, which is punishing him."

The prince then fell into thought; but soon numerous voices were heard in the large office near the audience chamber. The prince was awaiting the woman accused of having forged Alexandra Ivanovna's signature to the spurious will. Hearing the noise and feeling impatient, he went and opened the door, whereupon in the office he saw a number of clerks gathered round a man who was stuttering and stammering in answer to their questions. Near by there stood the accused woman, guarded by three soldiers. While the man stammered and gesticulated, she wept and wrung her hands, and at this sight some townsfolk who were also present asked permission to explain matters to his excellency. The confusion was so great that it seemed as if a riot were going on. The prince, in consternation, glanced at Murazoff, who took upon himself to call six of the oldest of the townsfolk into the governor's private room. It then appeared that the stammering man was the husband of the woman, that the latter had been arrested by surprise during the morning, and had never had anything to do with any will, being quite incapable of acting a part or of signing even her own name, much less that of Alexandra Ivanovna. The prince, though at first much astonished to find, as he thought, that the wrong woman had been arrested (for he was ignorant of the ruse resorted to by Samosvistoff in favour of Tchitchikoff), finally gave orders for the alarmed couple to be sent home in one of his own carriages, and he expressed his regret to them that such a mistake had been made.

At that moment a young official entered the private room and remained standing in a respectful attitude with his portfolio. He was one of the few who engage *con amore* in the administration of affairs, instigated neither by ambition, nor by a desire for gain. In fact, he occupied himself with public affairs because he was convinced that his life had been given him for that purpose. His business consisted in sifting a matter and in picking it to pieces, and explaining it when he had grasped all its tangled threads. He felt that his toil, his efforts, and his sleepless nights were abundantly rewarded if the matter at length became intelligible to him, and when he saw that he could report upon it in a few clear and definite words, so that it would be patent and comprehensible to everyone.

The prince, seeing his young assistant, greeted him kindly; and then, as he wished to profit by a journey which Murazoff was about to make, so as to have various instructions carried

out in different parts of the province, he began to speak to him on the subject. Murazoff readily consented to do whatever the prince required, and the latter then resumed: "Those faithless subordinates of mine who by their orgies and their avidity have stirred up the famine-stricken districts, have now returned here, and I shall give them their dues. I have just seen a most compromising letter, sent by one of them to a certain lawyer here, a thorough intriguer, whom I intend to turn out of the city. I must now also send some troops into the disaffected districts, especially to the one where the Raskolniki (Old Believers) are becoming turbulent; that is, unless you really think that your presence and sagacity would suffice to bring those unfortunate people to reason."

"Yes, I think so, prince; and to make all the surer of success, I shall myself supply the impoverished districts with barley and rye. That is a business which I know better than your officials do; I will make personal observation as to what is needful. And, if your excellency will permit it, I will talk with the Raskolniki. They will converse more freely with a civilian like myself. Thus, God knows, I may perhaps be able to arrange matters peaceably with them. The officials would arrange nothing. A correspondence on the subject would ensue, and they so complicate matters on paper that the affair would become even more confused than it now is. I shall accept no money from you, for it would be a shame, at such a time, to think of one's own purse when people are perishing of hunger. I have abundant stores of grain; I have already exported some to Siberia, and I shall send some more next summer."

"God alone can requite you for such a service, Afanasiy Vasilievitch. I shall not say another word to you; you can realise the situation yourself; words are inadequate and useless. But with regard to the petition I have received from eighty-two officials of the town in favour of eleven of their colleagues convicted of deceit and prevarication, I don't think I have a right to let this matter pass without notice. Whatever the petitioners may say, it would not be just or honourable on my part to pardon knaves."

"By heavens! your excellency, it is impossible to call them that, the more so as many of them are very worthy people. The situations in which a man sometimes finds himself are difficult—very, very difficult. There are cases when a man seems to be undoubtedly guilty, but when you inquire into the matter, it is not he at all who is to blame."

"But what will they themselves say if I let them off? There are certainly some among them who will raise their noses higher than ever after this, and even say that they had frightened me. They will be the first to show me disrespect, and my authority will be compromised."

"Permit me, your excellency, to communicate to you my

advice on this subject. Call all the officials together, give them to understand that you know everything, represent to them your own position in the very terms in which you have just been pleased to present it to me, and ask their advice as to what each one of them would do in your place."

"Yes; you think they will be accessible to nobler sentiments than those connected with intriguing and enriching themselves! Pooh! they will only laugh at me."

"I do not think so, your excellency. There is some sense of justice left, even in a person who is worse than the common run of men. Some Jew might behave in that way, but not a Russian. No, your excellency, there is no necessity for your concealing your meaning. Speak to them exactly as you have been graciously pleased to speak to me. They accuse you of being a proud and ambitious man, who will listen to nothing, and who trusts in himself alone; so let them see everything as it really is. How can it affect you? You are in the right. Speak to them as though it were not in their presence, but in the presence of God himself, that you were making your confession."

"Afanasiy Vasilievitch," said the prince thoughtfully, "I will think this over; and in the meanwhile, I thank you sincerely for your advice."

"And will your excellency order Tchitchikoff's release?"

"Well, yes, I will. Tell Tchitchikoff that he is to take himself off as speedily as possible, within twenty-four hours; and the farther he goes, the better. I should never forgive him if he fell under my hand again."

Murazoff went straight from the prince to Tchitchikoff. He found our hero already in fine spirits, calmly occupied with the very excellent dinner which had been brought to him from a very good restaurant. From the very first phrases of the conversation, the old man perceived that Tchitchikoff had somehow contrived to win over some of the cunning officials. He even realised that the invisible influence of the crafty lawyer had been exercised in the case.

"Listen to me, Pavel Ivanovitch," said he; "I have brought you your freedom, on conditions that you quit the city instantly. Collect your effects, and God be with you! Don't delay your departure for a moment, for matters may grow worse. I am aware that a certain person is instigating you to your present course; but I can inform you in confidence that certain affairs are now on the point of disclosure which are of such a nature that no earthly powers will be able to save him. Of course, he will wish to ruin others in his fall; but, no matter, the day of reckoning is at hand. When I left you just now you were in a favourable state of mind, much more favourable than you are now. My advice to you was not lightly given. Don't be so eager for that wealth for which men quarrel and cut each other's

throats. Believe me, Pavel Ivanovitch, until men cast aside all the things for the sake of which they gnaw and devour each other upon this earth, until they direct their attention to the rational acquisition of spiritual wealth, true opulence and order will never be established upon earth. Days of famine are approaching for the whole nation, and for each one separately. That is clear. Say what you like, the body does depend upon the soul. If you wish it to progress as it should, don't think any more of dead souls, but of your own living soul, and, with God's aid, adopt a different course of life. I also shall take my departure to-morrow. Make haste to leave, for if you don't a misfortune will happen to you in my absence."

So saying, the old man quitted the room. Tchitchikoff grew thoughtful, and he concentrated his mind upon the significance of life. "Murazoff is right," said he. "It is time to enter on a different path!"

So saying, he left his prison, one of the guards carrying his dressing-case to the outer gate. God alone knows how delighted Selifan and Petrushka were over their master's release.

"Well, my good fellows," said Tchitchikoff, turning to them in an amiable way, "you must harness up and start."

"All right, Pavel Ivanovitch," said Selifan. "The road must be laid by this time, for a good deal of snow has fallen, and it will be fine for sledging. It really is time to get out of this accursed city. We ourselves are so tired of it that we don't want to stay in it a day longer."

"Go to the carriage-maker, and tell him to fit some runners to the calash," said Tchitchikoff. He did not care to pay any farewell calls on anyone. He felt awkward after all that had passed—the more so, as many scandals of the most unpleasant description were in circulation about him in the city. He avoided all encounters, and quietly went to the merchant from whom he had previously purchased the Navarino smoke-and-flame coloured cloth; of this, he bought four arshins more to serve for a coat and trousers, and then he directed his course to the same tailor as before. In consideration of double pay, the fellow agreed to expedite matters; and the tailor colony sat down to work all night, with needle, goose, and teeth, so that the coat was ready on the morrow, although a little late. It was excellent, exactly like the first one. But, alas! Tchitchikoff observed that there was now a smooth white spot on his head; and he wailed mournfully. "And why need I have indulged in such violent grief? I ought not to have torn my hair for a long time to come."

After settling with the tailor, he at length left the town. He was no longer the Tchitchikoff of former days; he was merely the ruin of the old Tchitchikoff. His soul, by its internal condition, might have been compared to a building which has been pulled to pieces, in order than a new one may be constructed

from it, which new one has not yet been begun, as the final plans have not yet arrived from the architect, so that the workmen are left in a state of indecision.

Old Murazoff took his departure an hour before Tchitchikoff, in a kibitka in company with his clerk, Potapuitch; and one hour after Tchitchikoff's departure, an order was circulated through the town to the effect that the prince wished to see everyone of the officials on the occasion of his approaching trip to Petersburg.

The entire official force of the city, beginning with the civil governor and ending with a titular councillor, assembled in the grand hall of the governor-general's residence. There were all the heads of offices and departments, councillors, assessors, Sourbiters, Rednoses, Blowhards*; those who had taken bribes, those who had not; those whose souls were crooked, those whose souls were getting crooked, and those whose souls were not crooked at all. All awaited the entrance of the governor-general in considerable excitement and trepidation. The prince made his appearance with a face which was neither gloomy nor pleasant; his glance was firm, so was his step. The entire official assemblage bowed, some of them to their very girdles. The prince responded with a slight inclination of the head, and then began as follows:—

"As I am on the point of starting for Petersburg, I have thought it proper to have an interview with you, and I will explain to you in some degree the cause of my adopting this course. A very disgraceful affair has occurred here in our very midst. I presume that many of those now present know to what matter I refer. This affair has led to the detection of other matters not less disgraceful, in which men whom I have hitherto regarded as honest have become involved. I am even acquainted with their secret purposes to confuse and muddle everything in such a manner that it will be absolutely impossible to arrive at a clear knowledge of the situation. I know who is the leader in all this, and all about his secret action, although he has very cleverly kept in the background all through. But the point lies here—that I intend to investigate this matter, not by a formal investigation of the papers, but by swift trial, as in time of war; and I hope that the emperor will grant me the right to do so, when I have laid the whole business before him. In this case, as there exists no possibility of carrying out the proceedings in the usual form, since cabinets full of documents have been burned, and since efforts are being made by means of forged denunciations and other false extraneous testimony to confuse this matter, which is dark enough already, I consider a court-martial to be the sole resource, and I should like to gather your opinion on the subject."

The prince paused, as though awaiting a reply. All stood with their eyes fixed on the floor. Many of them were pallid.

* Translations of epithets employed as proper names.

"I am also acquainted with another transaction," resumed his excellency, "although those engaged in it feel perfectly sure that it cannot be possibly known to anyone. The prosecution will in this instance be vigorously pressed; for I shall myself be the informant and the plaintiff, and I shall present convincing proofs."

One of the official assemblage now shuddered, and some of the more timid fairly took alarm.

"As a matter of course," continued the prince, "the chief ringleader will be punished by the loss of his rank and property, and the rest by removal from office. Possibly many innocent men will suffer. But what is to be done? The affair is a very dishonourable one, and people cry aloud for justice. Although I am aware that this will not even serve as a lesson to others—for in the place of those who are discharged, others will make their appearance, and the very men who have hitherto been honest will become dishonest, and the very men who are honoured with my confidence will deceive and betray me—still, in spite of all this, I am forced to act rigorously, for the case is one in which punishment is requisite. I know that I shall be accused of harshness and cruelty, but I also know that I shall be less blamed by those for whom I must now become simply an instrument of justice, destined to fall upon their heads."

An involuntary shudder passed over the faces of all who were present. The prince was calm. Neither wrath nor mental emotion of any kind was reflected upon his countenance.

"Well," he continued, "the man in whose hands the fate of many lies, and whom no appeals could hitherto move, now appeals to you all. All shall be forgotten, wiped out, forgiven; I will myself intercede for all, if you will comply with my request. This is what I ask. I know that dishonesty cannot be extirpated by any means whatever, neither by terror nor by chastisement. It has become too deeply rooted. The dishonourable practice of taking bribes has come to be a necessity, and indispensable even for those who were not born with dishonest instincts. I know that it is impossible for many men to resist the general current. But I am now obliged—at a sacred and decisive moment, when the salvation of the country is in question, when every citizen contributes all he has, and sacrifices everything to relieve his starving countrymen—I am obliged to make a proclamation to all those who still have a Russian heart in their bosoms, and who have any comprehension of the significance of the word *nobility*. Why discuss which of us is the most to blame? I am perhaps more to blame than all the others; I may have been too stern with you in the beginning; I may through my superfluous suspicion have repulsed such of you as honestly desired to be of service to me. But if those I refer to really loved justice and the welfare of their country, they should not have taken offence at the haughtiness of my demeanour; they should have stifled

their own self-pride, and sacrificed their own personalities. I should have noted their self-sacrifice and their lofty sentiments, and have finally accepted wise and useful advice from them. Nevertheless, the subordinate ought rather to mould himself to the temper of his chief, than the chief to the temper of his subordinates. This is, at all events, more lawful and easier, since many subordinates have but one chief, whereas each chief has a hundred subordinates. But we will now lay aside the question as to who is the most to blame. The point lies here—that we are called upon to save our country; that our father-land is being ruined, not by the incursions of twenty foreign nations, but by ourselves; that beside the lawful government, another government has been established which is much more powerful than any lawful one. We have fixed our own conditions; everything has had a price set upon it, and these prices have even become universally known. And no ruler, were he even wiser than all the rulers and lawgivers in the world, can remedy this evil, no matter how greatly he limits the action of dishonest officials by appointing other officials to overlook them. All means indeed will prove unavailing until each one of us feels that he must prepare to repel dishonesty, in the same manner in which he armed himself at the epoch of the great national rising. I now appeal to you as a Russian, as a man of one blood with yourselves. I turn to those among you who have the least comprehension of what nobility of thought consists in. I invite them to remember their duty—duty, which presents itself to man wherever and whatever he may be. I invite them to examine their duties more closely, and the obligations of the service they belong to."

"And now, gentlemen," added the prince, "will you now be kind enough to follow me into the adjoining apartment?"*

As the prince uttered these words, he made a sign to the lackeys who were standing on each side of one of the doors of the audience-room, and this door was instantly flung open. The governor-general then passed into the largest apartment of his official quarters; the entire assembly followed him there and the door was closed again. This apartment, which was surrounded by writing-tables, was lighted from above, and had in all five doors, all of which were closed; in front of each, inside the room, stood two gendarmes, armed and motionless. This circumstance seemed to add to the gravity of the language

* Here Gogol's text comes to an end, as stated in our preface. However, in 1857 a book was published at Kieff under the title of *Continuation and Conclusion of Dead Souls*, by Vastchenko Zakhartchenko. What follows is taken from that work, in the belief that it will please those who like to have their stories complete, and serve as a curiosity to others. The MS. destroyed by Gogol was no doubt very different; and the following matter must be regarded as a mere experiment, such as has been made at various times in England by second- and third-rate writers in attempting to complete the unfinished work of some great novelist—as witness Thackeray's *Denis Duval*, and Dickens's *Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

which they had just listened to. Still another peculiarity attracted general attention: only a few chairs usually stood near each of the writing-tables; but on this occasion, the chairs were considerably more numerous than usual, and on the tables in front of the chairs there lay sheets of white paper, and on the paper freshly cut pens.

The prince now addressed the company in these words:—

"Gentlemen, the request which I am about to make to you is this: please to seat yourselves, take your pens, and write down freely on those sheets of paper your opinion of the communication which I have just made to you, and of which I feel sure you have not missed a word. You will not require more than twenty minutes to enunciate your sentiments as to the state of things which I have described to you, and as to the measures which I ought to take. At all events, I wish to have the one hundred and sixty-two sheets of paper written, signed, and dated by your own hands within half an hour's time."

After speaking these last words, he withdrew into his study. Half an hour later he re-entered the room, had all the sheets of paper collected and then courteously dismissed the assemblage. All the officials retired, either thoughtful or depressed, and returned home, without dreaming even of questioning one another.

After the scrutiny, which was conducted under the prince's own eyes, twenty-seven humble resignations were laid on one side. The twenty-eighth, however, was written with a noble and profound sentiment of wounded pride. It came from an exalted personage, who, moreover, called in person, and who was immediately admitted. The explanation and the conduct of this official, who had resigned, indicated reviving loyalty and a general return to better sentiments. The prince promised to add a marginal note to the petition which this person had addressed to the sovereign, in order to obtain his discharge; he then undertook to preside in person over a tribunal of arbitration, which Lyenitzuin besought him to establish immediately, and in the presence of which he was desirous of terminating, in an honourable manner, the scandalous suit, which had arisen between himself and the other interested parties with regard to the testamentary dispositions of his late relative, Khlobuyoff's aunt.

This matter having been arranged, the prince wrote a circular, copies of which were despatched that same evening to the twenty-seven scamps of divers ranks who had been led to acknowledge themselves guilty on the spot. Each one was invited to consider whether it would not be appropriate, whilst sending in a petition for permission to resign, which really amounted to an appeal to the sovereign for mercy, to support this petition by an apology to his fellow-men, in the shape of some good deed—for example, the gift of some money to the poor of the district who

were suffering from famine. Then they all were to name to which of the Eastern governments they wished to retire with the simple rank of citizen. The prince's circular procured for the poor inhabitants of the district, now sorely afflicted with famine, a sum of nearly one hundred thousand roubles which was distributed among them.

At the expiration of three months not a single one of these twenty-seven rascals remained in the town. We do not know whether any others afterwards arrived in their stead, but these were all forced to quit the government, never to appear there more. As for the lawyer, we do not know whether it was of his own free will or in consequence of certain orders he received, that he decided to make a prolonged sojourn in the vicinity of Lake Baïkal; however, fifty days after the departure of our hero the ex-advocate was installed in a small house in the western suburb of Irkutsk. There, in the midst of gardens, like Diocletian after he had abdicated the imperial throne, our fallen lawyer, in the lack of employment for his legal talents, innocently occupied himself in cultivating vegetables and preparing all sorts of preserves.

His excellency the civil governor, Lyenitzuin, in company with his wife and their charming infant, set out on their side for Nice, where they intended to spend the winter. As for Khlobuyoff, in the course of his tour of penitence he had raised his humble mission almost to the level of a sort of apostleship. Treasures of really even angelic eloquence had been discovered in this man, for so long a time both a dissipated and frivolous fellow, and the effects of his words on the people far surpassed those which Murazoff had hoped for. The repentant Lyenitzuin, it should be mentioned, bought back the hereditary domain of Khlobuyoff, who, on his mission being accomplished, learnt that his land has been been restored to him free from all encumbrances, abundantly provided with agricultural implements, with grain, horses, oxen, and flocks, and managed for a year, free of cost, by an upright agriculturist known to Murazoff and Kostanzhogol. Moreover, Lyenitzuin decided to pay Khlobuyoff an annuity of twenty thousand roubles, with reversion, after his death, to his wife, and, in default of him and his wife, to their eldest child.

But let us return to our hero, and let us see what thoughts occupy his mind after his rescue from a most perilous situation, by precisely the very matters which seemed destined to precipitate his ruin; that is to say, by the deluge of accusations brought against him, by the unexampled complications which had arisen, and by his arbitrary imprisonment, which at first seemed merely a preliminary to Siberia or the scaffold.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

MISERY AND GRANDEUR OF TCHITCHIKOFF. HIS OPINIONS IN THE LAP OF FORTUNE

MORE than a month had elapsed since Tchitchikoff had enjoyed the seven hours of sleep per day which are considered indispensable to the health of man; and of late, repose seemed to have totally abandoned him at night. Thus the gentle, easy motion of the sleigh now proved conducive to repose, and, stretched out comfortably in his calash, he slept for fourteen hours. He woke himself at last by a powerful snore resembling the detonation of a blunderbuss, followed by a sneeze of the most sonorous description; and the commotion which accompanied this double explosion was a double test, to boot, for the admirable springs of the ancient calash. A dog broke his chain, a cock set his numerous family the example of a headlong flight; two peasants ran out into their yards to see who could be thus firing close to their dwellings; a woman, trembling like a leaf and standing with her mouth open, let fall a large jar of clotted milk on the threshold of a barn. However, Selifan and Petrushka, who were not deceived as to the nature of the phenomenon, rushed straight to their master's couch. Tchitchikoff, as soon as he could understand things about him, learned that the horses had been obliged to halt in order to regain their breath and strength, and that his people, after having kept their seats on the box for nearly fifteen hours by the clock, had taken advantage of this enforced halt to refresh themselves a little on some cabbage, milk, and hot bread.

Our hero entered the public room of the rustic hostelry where his servants had fed, and there devoured by himself the third of a fine *kulebyaka*,* weighing between six and eight pounds, which the landlord had prepared for a wedding in the village; then, the horses having been once more harnessed to the carriage, he paid his reckoning, resumed his seat, and set out again on his journey, after having fully informed himself as to the situation of the estates of a certain Dobryakoff, who, five days prior to the imprisonment of Tchitchikoff, had received from the latter a deposit of three very heavy coffers.

Our hero found Dobryakoff's house well enough, and also the

* A fish-pasty, the contents of which have been previously described.

coffers which were awaiting him, but not Dobryakoff himself, for he was absent. The uncle of that gentleman, an old man over eighty years of age, gave Tchitchikoff and his servants a perfect dinner, delivered the coffers up to his visitor, and only allowed him to depart after a formal promise to return shortly and visit his nephew.

Our hero soon cruelly repented of the precipitation with which he abandoned that hospitable roof, where he had not considered it prudent to remain on account of the burden which he was carrying away. He had hardly resumed his journey when the sky clouded over, the wind rose, and terrible squalls of snow whirled around him; every trace of the road disappeared, and the tempest was all the more alarming since it was united with sharp cold.

The travellers, who had lost their way completely, wandered about at random, still advancing until after midnight with infinite difficulty, and not without great danger, when at length the despair which had seized hold of them was followed by a feeble ray of hope; the hurricane diminished in violence, the darkness became less impenetrable, and they fancied they could see a clearing, surrounded by thick underwood, stretching before them. Fortunately they kept the wind behind them, and they skilfully tacked and tacked whilst in the valleys formed by the thousands of snow heaps, which were alternately raised and carried off by the tempest. During an interval of enforced halt made by the horses, who were overcome with fatigue, they heard the barking of dogs. This auspicious sound restored a little courage, even to the steeds, and five minutes later they could distinguish some lights in the distance.

They were those of the hunting-box of a wealthy nobleman, who was staying there with a considerable number of friends and neighbours. His whole pack of hounds was assembled there, with all his huntsmen—a truly royal establishment; while the company was gathered in the principal apartment, having just concluded a copious and splendid supper, which had been wound up with lavish libations. It was at this moment that Pavel Ivanovitch was announced to the nobleman, Prince Kutinin, as a traveller who had lost his way, and who requested his excellency's hospitality for the night. The prince, who was busy having several card-tables prepared, ordered that the stranger should, first of all, be supplied with a good supper and a fire, and that he should afterwards be presented to him, unless indeed he preferred to go to bed.

At the expiration of an hour, Tchitchikoff was in the drawing-room, seated beside the prince, who had just won from a young gentleman, at cards, first his ready money, then two estates he owned, next his stud, and finally his equipages, weapons and dogs.

The prince was desirous of learning who was the guest whom the storm had sent him. Tchitchikoff posed as a man who,

wearied of the benumbing influence of towns, was in search of an estate and a wife, as he henceforth wished to live a family life, and to indulge in his tastes for agriculture. Upon hearing this, the prince informed him of a magnificent estate at a distance of thirty versts or so, which belonged to a young lady who knew how to manage her property extremely well, and who would no doubt be charmed to make our hero's acquaintance, and, better still, to bestow herself and all her possessions upon him. Then he invited Tchitchikoff to join in a game of faro, that was, if he felt inclined to tempt fortune. But our hero at the moment had to give some orders to his servants. He had himself shown to the small chamber which had been assigned to him, and an apology was made to him, as, in order to reach it, he was forced to pass through the kitchen. On entering his apartment, followed by Petrushka, he beheld the three coffers ranged against the wall; and he gazed at them intently with a contraction of his brows, for they constituted a very heavy burden for him to carry about with him in all his peregrinations. Suddenly the idea occurred to him to ask Petrushka if he knew who the man was with a piercing glance, whom he had seen sitting on a stool near the kitchen fire.

"He is a Jew," answered Petrushka, "and is said to be worth millions. Chance always leads men of his class to places where fortunes fly about."

"Beg him to come here, then, and leave me alone with him; but try to borrow a scale and some weights, and remain in the kitchen near at hand."

The Jew was brought in, the scales were procured, and, at the expiration of half an hour, the three embarrassing coffers* had disappeared from the room, and perhaps even from the house. Tchitchikoff returned to the drawing-room without having opened his cash-box, but with seventy-five thousand good roubles in his pocket-book, a portion of which he decided to risk at play. He had the best of luck; and the finest piece of all was, undoubtedly, that, having won thirty thousand roubles without anyone paying any heed to it, he had the pleasure of seeing the whole company, overwhelmed with fatigue, break up into groups, and, preceded by lackeys armed with torches, retire to their rooms. It was now five o'clock in the morning.

Tchitchikoff did not sleep. The weather was now perfectly calm, and the moonlight superb. He pushed his bed towards the door, in such a manner as to barricade it, and opened his cash-box on a large stool, quite close to him. Then, sitting up in bed, with the white coverlet thrown picturesquely round his shoulders, he set to work to count up his capital. As he was completing this intoxicating operation, he beheld a man, who seemed to be observing him, rise up beneath his window. He

* These coffers contained the gold and silver plate which was missing after the death of Khlobuyoff's aunt.

instantly darted to the casement, armed with a slipper, held as though it were a pistol; and his gesture imparted a comical fright to the prowler, in whom Tchitchikoff suddenly recognised his coachman, Selifan. He called him, and gave him formal orders to harness the horses and be ready to set out at daybreak.

Tchitchikoff's double team was not in a state to travel even ten versts, dragging the calash and towing the britchka behind; but, as luck would have it, there chanced to be fifteen stout post-horses stalled in a coach-house there, and they were to start at daybreak for a posting station situated nineteen versts away, and in the very direction of the estate of the wealthy spinster whom Prince Kutinin had alluded to on the evening before. Tchitchikoff's own horses were accordingly attached behind his carriage, so that the trip proved only a promenade for the poor beasts. After three hours' repose at an inn, which was situated on the boundary-line between two provinces, they were harnessed in earnest, and, going at a gentle trot, they were able to reach the house where happiness was possibly awaiting Tchitchikoff.

Our hero had thought it necessary, before covering this short distance of fifteen versts, to take minute pains with his toilet. In vain was he informed that Appolina Mercurievna had had twenty suitors, all of whom she had successively ill-used and dismissed; that she was proud, fantastic, choleric, and often cruel; that she made her twenty-five hundred souls suffer more than they would suffer in hell, and that she was abetted in this task by a woman, who, like herself, had remained unmarried, and who, by her redoubtable activity, appeared a hundred times more ferocious than her noble mistress. However, our friend wished to see and to judge for himself, and so he presented himself, was duly received, paid his court, pleased the lady, became enamoured of her somewhat vigorous charms, made his offer, and was accepted. Then a day was fixed for the wedding.

There was great joy among the gentlewoman's serfs, on hearing that a man would soon become their master, and they imagined that this master was an angel from heaven, a saviour, who had been sent to them by Providence. O hope! what gulfs of misery and sorrow dost thou now and again embellish with a fleeting ray! Meanwhile the lady's relatives, who had been invited to the wedding, arrived from all directions. One of them, alas! came from the very town whence Tchitchikoff had come, and this man privately told his cousin of all that he knew, or thought he knew, respecting our hero; and this occurred on the very eve of the day appointed for the nuptials. Appolina having heard that Tchitchikoff had begged mercy from the governor-general for his crimes, in the name of his wife and children, knew all she cared to know of the monster. She awaited him, surrounded by all her guests, who, not having been forewarned, had assumed looks of delight and pleasure; and at the moment

when Tchitchikoff entered the room, and hastened forward to kiss her hand, that same hand suddenly showered down upon his rosy cheeks a perfect hailstorm of blows. And in the meanwhile this infuriated spinster poured forth a torrent of frightful language, and ordered her lackeys to hound this fine gentleman to his calash, which was all harnessed and packed ready for the road.

Our hero, who had fancied that he had finally reached the goal of his labours, the innocent and laudable object of his expeditions, who had seemed to be upon the point of marrying, of acquiring some fine domains, of enriching his vassals, of devoting himself to a country life, in the bosom of an amiable family, and of conquering, by dint of sagacity, order, and prudence, the respect and esteem of the whole world, then once more had to pass through the hands of perverse men. The first of these was a petty squire, the personal enemy of General Betrishtcheff, to whom he was so unfortunate as to mention that general. This mad and fantastic gentleman, who, as the result of numerous excesses, had reached the highest pitch of lunacy, dragged our hero off to his house, and constrained him to take part in one of those excessive orgies which seem likely to be followed either by madness or death. This man indeed compelled Tchitchikoff, under penalty of death, to drink more spirituous liquors in the space of two hours than he had drunk in the whole preceding thirty years; and then he had him kissed by fifty men, and immediately afterwards by fifty women, who obeyed his commands.

After this trial, the most terrible which he had so far endured, our hero escaped from the dangerous freaks of this tyrant of the steppes; and a few days later he fell in with a great nobleman, an Anglomaniac prince, who was perfectly infatuated with his stud and with sport, and who made him play a ridiculous part, by forcing him to adopt a horsey mania, which was quite out of consonance with his personal appearance. Nevertheless, on the advice of this nobleman, he betook himself to a neighbouring locality to inspect an estate which was for sale there.

In the house there, a young fellow who was in the diplomatic service, had just arrived from Petersburg, for the purpose of dividing the inheritance of a deceased uncle with his sister. This rustic damsel—a young girl of nineteen—like a genuine, pure-blooded inhabitant of the steppes, was still more terrible and ferocious than the Appolina of whom we have spoken. So our hero fled from the house, where the most violent scenes were of constant occurrence between this Amazon, who always had her whip in her hand, and her brother, whom she drove to extremities. It seemed as if it would all result in some unfortunate affair, of which Tchitchikoff did not care to be a witness. With regard to the dispute, he had recognised the fact that both the diplomat and his sister had set their minds on the same thing: the former was resolved to obtain, by ruse or knavery,

the larger part of the property; and she, on her side, was no less determined to obtain fully two-thirds of the inheritance, but by means of strife, ill-usage, scandal, and transports of rage.

At length, after having sold one hundred dead souls at a wretched price, to a man named Bosnyakoff, and to some of the petty officials of a town of the tenth rank, he was led twenty days later by business to the city of Krasnoi, situated in the district of the same name, and in the government of Bubni. There he installed himself at an inn, ordered his dinner, and while waiting to have it served him in his own room, he began to peruse *The Moscow Gazette*, which the waiter had just brought in. Therein he read his full name and a description of his person, with an order which had been sent to all the towns to arrest him and deliver him up to justice, for having bought, mortgaged, and sold a considerable number of dead souls, and for having committed in various governments divers deeds prohibited by the laws. Ten minutes later, and before Selifan had had time to harness the horses and to fetch the luggage, the police appeared, headed by the *gorodnitchiy*, or mayor of the town, a man about fifty years of age, who was very expert in all sorts of disputes. He first surveyed Tchitchikoff, his fine linen, and his general appearance of prosperity; he reflected upon his title of collegiate councillor, and took an interest in him; and then he cast a significant glance at his subordinates, who were attached to him. These subordinates retired into the corridor and discreetly closed the door.

"Listen, Pavel Ivanovitch," said the municipal officer. "You have been arrested on the complaint of a person named Bosnyakoff, who is a very malicious fellow, and wants to blacken you. I can send someone to him, and for five hundred roubles my messenger will contract with him to withdraw his complaint. I must tell you that he has accused you of having trafficked in dead souls of both sexes, and of having mortgaged a large number to the State Bank."

"In any case I have not done violence to anyone in either buying, selling, or mortgaging."

"No, you have not; but, now, if you have any money, say so, and I am on your side. For how much have you mortgaged your dead souls to the State Bank?"

"For eighty thousand roubles."

"You must pay that back promptly; in fact, you must deposit the sum to-morrow. You understand me?"

"I will do so. But I have still a thousand souls, from whom I shall never derive any profit, since I am under arrest."

"Never mind; I will find a way for you to mortgage them very profitably."

"Pray do me that favour."

The dialogue then proceeded as follows:

The mayor (*aside*): "Tell me aloud that you only have five

thousand roubles with you, and nothing else in the whole world. (*Aloud.*) State, sir, what sum you possess."

Tchitchikoff (*aloud*): "I possess five thousand roubles in silver, which constitute my entire property."

The mayor (*aloud*): "Hand me those five thousand roubles, sir."

Tchitchikoff (*aloud*): "Here they are."

The mayor, after opening the door: "That is all right, sir; don't be alarmed about a wretched intrigue. [*He counts the five thousand roubles, and divides it into two unequal parts.*] Five thousand. Good! I will take these four thousand five hundred and fifty roubles, which will suffice to pay your personal expenses and the current cost of the affair; the police will render you an account of your money at any time you may ask for it. The four hundred and fifty which you see in this pocket-book, I shall place in your valise; they will constitute the sum which was found when an inventory was taken. You understand me, I hope? His excellency the military governor orders that you shall be kept under guard until he has been more fully informed by the police; and as the police quarters are in my house, you will live at my house, if you please, with me, and just as I do."

This mayor had hardly any fortune, but he had kept on good terms with all classes of society. When a man impressed him as being rather good than evil, and when he could render him a service, he entered into the business with a great deal of zeal and goodwill. He had, above all things, a passion for a respectable air. On the present occasion he had the happiness of arranging, for less than one hundred and fifty roubles, all his prisoner's affairs, and in addition he enabled him to derive a very good profit from the thousand souls which were left on his hands. Then he was pleased to allow Tchitchikoff to marry his daughter Marya, who was young, docile, fresh, and ignorant, it is true—indeed, utterly insignificant; but she was very good and very affectionate all the same, the best sort of wife that could be desired for our hero, and whom we could wish for the majority of our friends and acquaintances.

A good third of the gentry of the government took part in the wedding, which lasted for three days without a break; and the newly-married couple retired to a very fine estate which Tchitchikoff had purchased, at a convenient distance from the city of Krasnoi, and where, in the space of ten years, amid satisfactions of all sorts, repose, and true happiness, he saw his first nine children born and grow up. Our hero occupied his leisure with agriculture, kitchen-gardening, and even with arboriculture; he regulated his expenses in perfect accordance with his revenues; and in order not to lose a certain talent of the pen which he possessed, he thought proper to gather together his memoirs, and commit them to paper in the form of notes, whence, from all appearance, and thanks to our author, has proceeded most of the present work.

In the eleventh year of this unclouded happiness, such as but very few honest men taste of, Pavel Ivanovitch felt troubled; he felt weary of so much repose, so much health, so much luck, monotony, uniformity, and calm felicity. His notes were abandoned, he received the caresses of his young family in an absent-minded way, and he no longer went beyond his grounds. As he wandered about his yard, he reminded Selifan and Petrushka of the days of their former peregrinations; he endeavoured to awaken in these burly men some desire for an excursion in the fashion of the olden days; but, they had become fond of a sedentary life as they grew old, and they did not understand his meaning. He gazed upon them with scorn, and felt enraged with himself for having addressed the brutes except in the way of giving orders.

One day, when the spring had arrived, however, he informed these ancient relics, and without tolerating a single word of objection, that on the morrow, the fifth of May, at daybreak, the calash was to stand ready harnessed at the door, and that they were to hold themselves prepared for an excursion of several months' duration. He proposed to go and visit Tentyotnikoff and the fair Ulinka, whose happiness he regarded as his own work. He should thus learn whether General Betrishtcheff was still of this world. He flattered himself that in any case he would be welcome, at least among a portion of his extensive circle of relations; and circumstances alone had prevented his revisiting the Tentyotnikoff family, as it was his duty to do, having made a promise to that effect.

They set out; but at the fourteenth verst, and five versts away from any wheelwright or blacksmith, two spokes and the rim of one of the wheels of the ancient calash broke. Tchitchikoff passed the night in a miserable village inn. On the following day, his constant presence in the artisan's shop having produced no result except that of retarding the work, through affording the rustic so many opportunities to chatter, he was forced to make up his mind to pass a second night in the so-called inn, which was a hut. And when at length, on the second day, the wheels were all in good condition, the master felt ill. Selifan and Petrushka exchanged a glance, and, without having received any orders or instructions, the animals took the road for home of their own free will. Marya learnt all, but she carefully refrained from interrogating her husband as to the cause of his prompt return, and from laughing at his lamentable tale—a piece of discretion which induced Tchitchikoff, after he had related what had taken place, to ridicule his project and his discomfiture.

He then subscribed to seven Russian papers and to three periodical foreign publications—two French and one German—although he did not know a hundred words of French, and not six of German.

Reading did not long suit his taste, however. On the other hand, he took some pleasure in caressing his children, though

he never thought of teaching or reproving them. He considered that the education of children was woman's work; and, with this view, he had provided his wife with an old Swiss governess, to whom he rarely spoke, not knowing very well what to say to her.

At last Tchitchikoff reverted, in spite of himself, to the idea of a journey, of some excursion or other, but without any definite plan. Whilst he was yet in a state of indecision, the end of the autumn and the whole of the winter passed by. However, the triennial election of magistrates was soon to take place in the chief town of the government—a town which was ordinarily quite deserted and sleepy, and which he had only visited at the time of his marriage, and on the occasion of purchasing his property. He had only spent six days there, and those incessantly in the courts. Several gentlemen, however, now came to sound his intentions, and to seek his vote; many of the outgoing magistrates, who wished to retain their positions, or even to obtain more important ones, hastened to pay court to him. Time sped on. It was a magnificent opportunity for escaping, at least for three weeks, from the uniformity and monotony of a prolonged sojourn in the country.

Our hero took the greatest delight in the preparations for his trip. He carefully inspected the condition of his fresh vehicle, recommended Selifan and Petrushka not to get drunk during his absence, for in lieu of these old retainers he preferred to take with him his new valet and his wife's coachman, a man of very fine appearance, who spoke little and drank a great deal, though he had never been seen intoxicated.

On reaching the city, our hero alighted at the best hotel, sent in haste for a tailor, and ordered a nobleman's uniform; then he dined, and went to take a walk in the public garden. On returning to his hostelry in the evening, he passed by the house occupied by the marshal of the nobility of the district and saw that it was brilliantly lighted up. The marshal, whose name was Stepan Stepanovitch Podgruzdyoff, had nearly half of the local nobility in his rooms. The servants were handing round tea, and the whole apartment was pervaded with an odour of lemon, rum, and Turkish tobacco. But what predominated over everything else was the discussion of the elections which were about to take place. Nearly all of Podgruzdyoff's guests were in a joyous frame of mind. He himself sat in a large magisterial chair, in front of the writing-table in his study; and the elective police judge, whose name was Prokop Petrovitch Zazhmurin, sat as near to him as possible on a light, fanciful chair, contrasting with the other one.

"I should be glad to hear from your own mouth an answer to this question," said the judge. "Will you comply with the desire of the entire nobility, who want you to remain marshal for another three years? It is very flattering to serve under you; and, infirm as I am, I might, in that case, consider the

subject of continuing my functions as judge for another term of three years, and even for two terms. But if they want me, it must be with you."

"No, Prokop Petrovitch," replied the marshal. "I have told you, and I hold to it, that I have done my duty and discharged my tribute. If the nobility re-elect me, all that I shall do will be to thank them very cordially; but at the same time I shall refuse."

"In that case, I shall adhere to my own determination not to be re-elected. Who would be a worthy representative of our district after you? Farewell, Stepan Stepanovitch! I regret that I have not been able to alter your decision. It is very bad of you to reject our supplications like this."

Judge Zazhmurin thereupon pressed the marshal's hand, and gained the street by descending the private staircase.

No sooner had he taken his departure, than captain-ispravnik Burdyakin entered the marshal's study. "Prokop Petrovitch has just gone," said he. "He surely must have told you that he has had more than enough of the service."

"That is really what he did say. What do you think of it, eh?"

"I think that he is humbugging us."

"Oh! indeed!"

"That is putting it mildly, for in reality he has his eye on the marshal's office. He marshal! Imagine anyone with that pig's snout as marshal!"

"He is ambitious, is he not?" asked Podgruzdyoff.

"A man may have a weakness; but the idea of Zazhmurin, with that phiz of his, thinking of representing the nobility! And even as a judge, what is he? To speak the plain truth, the nobility made a mistake in choosing him; for, after all, what is there more noble and sacred than to decide the fate of others? By the way, this office has been proposed to me, but I really dare not accept it. I have so much affection for our aristocracy, that I feel sure that every nobleman would always be in the right in my eyes, and the common people always in the wrong. With such a method, I should soon be involved in a criminal suit. But what is to be done? I am of opinion that one should always comply with the petition of a nobleman. Yes; I will do everything for the nobility."

"You *will* do. So you have come to a decision?"

"Oh, yes. I offer myself as a candidate, for the mere sake of overthrowing that Zazhmurin. I know, that if he sees that he has but few chances of being elected marshal, he will cling to his place of judge. He is a very crafty fellow."

"You are very intimate together, yet just see how you talk about him!"

"Intimate—intimate as one can be with *him*. He would like me to be a grain of salt, and hold out a spoonful of cool water to me; but no, I shan't wait for a bath."

"Ah!"

The marshal and the captain-ispravnik now passed into the drawing-room, where the conversation had turned from the elections to very different and rather risky subjects. As for the elections, each person kept his thoughts to himself. Equipages could be seen driving up outside, and for the most part entering the courtyard. The sound of the laughter and chatting of the new arrivals became audible, first at the foot of the stairs, and then in the ante-chamber. Several members of the local nobility entered. Their names were Hamyazoff, Morkatinoff, Shtchavarin, Sosikoff, and Kornikin. They saluted the assembly, and went to shake hands with Podgruzdyoff, who was quietly sitting on a sofa, with a cigar in his mouth. Hamyazoff and the brothers Morkatinoff had just come from a dinner at the house of the civil governor.

"If I had only known," said Hamyazoff, puffing out his cheeks, "I shouldn't have brought any wines, any cook, or any cooking utensils up from the country. This is an extremely hospitable town. I have only been here three days, and yet I have already taken part in seven dinners; I feel horribly afraid of acquiring a big belly. So, pardon and mercy, Stepan Stepanovitch! to-morrow I dine in two houses, and I am invited to breakfast in five others. I really do not know if I can come to you. My entertainers will end by making me burst."

"Here is a gentleman who has come to the elections in order to overfeed himself, and drink from morning till night; he can talk of nothing save his great digestive capacity," remarked a short, thin gentleman, with a complexion the colour of saffron. "All that one hears him talk about is, what he eats here, and what he will eat there; what he has drunk here, and how he became intoxicated there. Then he says that he is invited to five houses farther on; that he is now on his way to sup with some importunate count; that to-morrow morning at ten o'clock he will favour that monster of a prince with his company to breakfast. And so on; but how does he manage to lodge so much food in his body?"

These remarks were addressed to the "plenipotentiary" of an absent elector, a man whose countenance recalled that of a hare. He noisily repressed an inclination to laugh, and, in his fear of offending Hamyazoff or anyone else, he assumed the most serious possible mien. Then he passed a dirty silk handkerchief over his face and executed two or three dexterous skips, in order to reach a corner of the room. Here he made two or three pirouettes, still continuing to wipe his face; and, finally, he betook himself to a large table covered with a green cloth, bordered with gold fringe, from which he picked up the *Regulations of the Elections*, and began perusing them for the hundredth time, in a low voice, at the same time lending an ear to a noisy conversation which was going on in the next room. Podgruzdyoff now went out: he was going to the governor's for a few minutes, and

meanwhile a number of his guests remained, thinking it seemly to await his return. Hamyazoff accompanied Podgruzdyoff to the door of his carriage, and then returned to the drawing-room. At first he surveyed all the faces present, and whispered a few words in the ear of his neighbours, whereupon one of the electors said, "If Stepan Stepanovitch would only consent, we should be very glad to vote for him, so that he could remain in office."

"Well, gentlemen, you are not hard to suit, if you can put up with such a marshal as he is!" exclaimed Hamyazoff.

"What do you mean by that? Podgruzdyoff is an active man: see how he performs his duties as guardian, see how he protects the orphan, how he defends the widow!"

"Eh! That's his first duty; any one of us would do the same; but you pay no heed to another and equally important duty. What sort of a cook has he got? It's shameful! He pretends that that kitchen-man of his served his apprenticeship at the English club at Moscow: I don't believe a word of it, for my own part. He's but a sorry cook. One eats and eats of his cooking, and is never satisfied: it only fatigues one's jaws. You all know what to think of his stuffed dishes, which adhere to the teeth and the palate, they glue the coatings of my œsophagus together in a way which enforces silence upon me during the whole of the repast."

"And, God be thanked! that suits your neighbours capitally," said the little gentleman with the saffron complexion, raising a burst of laughter by this witticism.

"Jokes are somewhat misplaced to-day," retorted Hamyazoff; "we have come here to elect our magistrates. Listen! I know that Melekitchentzoff, who has just returned from abroad, wants to be elected marshal, and he's the very man whom we ought to elect; he has a cook, a genuine French artist, gentlemen. He will never regale you with any hotel-cookery. As far as the rest is concerned, why, I am ready to vote in favour of Podgruzdyoff, but on conditions that he changes his cook and engages a proper one."

"Send away his cook, indeed, for the sake of being elected marshal! Come, now!"

"What? He won't change his cook when the nobility desire it! If I were marshal, I would do everything in the world for the sake of pleasing the nobility. And stay! as a proof of my devotion, I declare to you that I will sacrifice my own cook to him, placing him at his disposal for the whole period of his office without payment. You will agree, I hope, that that is a real sacrifice. My cook is the soul of my house; and so as not to die of hunger, I shall have to desert wife, children, and home, to come to live with Podgruzdyoff. Never mind. I am prepared to do so, simply for the happiness of proving to all of you how devoted I am to the interests of the aristocracy."

Having concluded this speech, Hamyazoff remained with arms

outstretched, and his body bent forwards, awaiting a response, which did not come.

"We intend to ask Stepan Stepanovitch to remain with us for another three years," at last said one of the gentlemen.

"Even without cook or kitchen?" asked the glutton.

"Oh! to the devil with the cook! I have my dinner ready in my own house," replied the gentleman.

"Well," said Hamyazoff, "all the same, I think that we ought to elect Melekitchentzoff."

"No! No!"

"Why not? Think of what awful stuff Podgruzdyoff makes us eat."

"We will make matters right for Podgruzdyoff when the balloting begins!" cried three or four persons at once. "He is worthy of his position, and does honour to our district."

"Who? Podgruzdyoff?" said Burdyakin, the captain-ispravnik, at this moment entering the room. "Oh! a marshal is always good and worthy, of course. But listen: I will make no secret of the fact that several people wish to elect me judge. Yes, me. You understand—judge. That is what can be denominated an important and sacred office. But I fear lest I might have to condemn a noble. I should acquit him: on my word of honour, I should acquit him. That would be equivalent to placing a cord about my own neck. But every nobleman will be acquitted. So in the name of heaven, do not vote for either me or Zazhmurin. Besides, although Zazhmurin cannot reconcile himself to the idea of not being elected, remember that it will be rendering him a service to vote against him. His wife has spoken to me. It is said that work has quite deranged his nerves; and for his wife, as you can imagine—— Well, as for myself, I will, in the first place, tell you sincerely, that if it pleases the nobility to elect me judge, all well and good: I shall not dare to refuse. I shall submit. In short, you may dispose of me as you think proper."

Thereupon this candidate saluted the company and withdrew with a brisk step.

There had also been a gathering at Zazhmurin's, but of persons of a lower quality. Some of them drank brandy, and nibbled bread and butter and sandwiches. Barantzoff, the auditor, was playing a game of cards, each point being valued at a quarter of a copeck, with three men who held powers of attorney from different absent nobles. Zazhmurin, Burdyakin, and he had hired this lodging in company. In an extremely ruinous carriage-house which stood in the yard of the place, an ex-cornet of hussars, the prodigal Prince Smuirsky, was lodged, Barantzoff having procured him a commission as an elector's deputy, and brought him there for nothing. The prince was continually entering the rooms, in order to get an opportunity to refresh himself. He was also continually quarrelling with Barantzoff, his temporary

patron; and after each quarrel, he retreated to his carriage-shed, where he remained grumbling and fuming until dinner or supper time, when his heart experienced the necessity of effecting a reconciliation with the auditor.

"Tikhon Semyonovitch," said the prince enthusiastically to Barantzoff, "it is for your sake that I came to town." And as he said this he pulled his moustache.

"Yes, indeed, I had the glory of bringing you with me, prince," retorted Barantzoff, dealing the cards with a serious air.

"As a friend you will have my vote," continued the prince. "I have come here for your sake, and shall vote for you."

"Pass," now said Barantzoff, to his partners at cards, and rising up he left the room.

"That dear friend of mine can count on some black balls," said the prince, as soon as he had gone. "I will collect a handful of them, and stuff them in for my neighbours and myself. He can reckon on that."

At this moment Barantzoff returned, whereupon the prince continued, "I wish it to be thoroughly understood that Barantzoff and I are a genuine pair of friends."

He then drank a glass of punch, smacked his lips, stamped his feet, and set his glass on the window-sill; then he seated himself on a wretched chair, which he tormented in an unworthy manner, while he complacently picked his nose, and whistled an air which he seemed to be intentionally rendering unintelligible.

"We must be careful with the prince until the voting is over," said Zazhmurin to his friends, "for he can talk rather disagreeably when he likes."

"Yes; but he can be prevented from doing anything foolish, can't he? A man of that kind——"

"Where the deuce did he get that coat?" asked another of the card-players. "It does not belong to him. Look at the two big creases down the back."

"Oh, Barantzoff lent him that coat for the elections."

"Speak lower," rejoined another person. "Someone said a word to the prince yesterday about that very coat. 'It's my coat!' he cried. 'No one will wear it after me. I never take it off. When I went to bed last night I would not permit my servants to take it off. I had a fancy for sleeping in my coat. Has anyone any remarks to make on it?' That is just what he said, speaking too with great violence."

"What are you muttering among yourselves?" at this moment asked the prince. "It strikes me that you are reviling me. Order me some punch and tobacco, or beware of my black-balling you all. Forward, march! Left wheel! Make haste with the liquor."

"Stop that, prince; your jokes are not quite the thing."

"Bitter, eh? Well, in the company of clever people, my wit is light and sweet. It varies according to my surroundings, you

see. You will all be served with black balls, remember; for, being a prince, I detest demagogues. To-morrow comes the oath. There will be no drawing back. I must do as my conscience dictates. You want office; you set yourselves up as candidates for the magistracy, and you belong to a party; you put yourself at the head of a band. And why do you covet these positions? In order to coin money out of them. Ah! we know all about it, and I'll settle your business, that I will!"

"What an odd idea of yours to irritate him, gentlemen," remarked someone in a corner of the room.

"Ah! very true. So you are there, my little hare," said the prince, addressing the person who had just spoken. "Well, let us see what you want. You have just been married, hey? And to whom, you fool? And now you want to be an auditor, eh?" The prince then went and whispered in the ear of his little hare, and finally resumed in a louder key, "Now, speak out! You know that I am pretty well off as regards connections—that I am an aristocrat, an ultra-aristocrat, poor though I am; I have free entrance to the governor's house and the marshal's, so I have plenty of means of procuring people protectors. Let us suppose that Barantzoff or someone else makes me a present of a nobility uniform with some embroidery of pure gold, such as befits my rank. Where is the general who would have a grander air than I? Barantzoff has a high opinion of me, as you know, and for the time being, we lodge here together. But that is not always the case. I have an apartment of my own all to myself. Faith, I pay seven roubles for the sake of occupying it during the elections. Barantzoff feeds me as a matter of course. But that's only right. Neither on the journey nor here have I fasted for a single hour." Then in a very low voice the prince added, "Barantzoff wants to be a councillor; only think of it!"

"Another candidate! But he has been holding office for eighteen years already. Surely that's long enough."

"Let him hold his pockets well open, and I will provide him with plenty of black balls. Only don't you say anything about it—you understand—ts, ts. But, wait a bit, I must embrace you. Do you know, your wife is very pretty! Ugh, ugh! I've got the stomach-ache. I don't know what that animal Barantzoff gives us to eat, but I feel quite upset."

Thereupon the prince quitted the room, and crossed the yard to reach his coach-house. It really was time he did so, out of regard for the peace of mind of the other gentlemen. However, they also withdrew less than a quarter of an hour later.

Zazhmurin retired, but left a candle burning near the bed which was prepared for Burdyakin, his friend the captain-sipravnik, with whom one is already acquainted, and who, to the great astonishment of the judge, had not returned. However, at two o'clock in the morning there came a violent knocking at

the gate in the courtyard. Zazhmurin awoke and sat up in bed. The three servants whom he had brought with him from the country were sleeping, fully dressed, on the floor of the ante-room. Zazhmurin roused them and despatched them to the gate, and a moment later Burdyakin entered like a bomb, pale, disordered, his hair unkempt, and a cloak for his only garment.

"Where have you been?" asked Zazhmurin, with mingled interest and anxiety.

"Oh, don't speak of it! I have just come from a place where they will never catch me again. It is the first time in my life that I have been there, and it will be the last. Hey, there, some cold water! I cannot recover from my fright."

"Tell me what is the matter with you."

"Don't ask me."

"But your boots, your breeches, your cap?"

"Heaven be praised! I am safe and sound myself; the deuce take my effects! Hey, there, boy! Some ice, some ice, quick, and rub my back, the whole of my back!"

"There's something amiss, I see; so I shall get up, and make a declaration to the police."

"No, pray do nothing of the sort! In the name of heaven, do not stir! Another investigation—that would be a pretty mess. I have only been to a dancing-school; but if my wife knew that I had set foot in such an establishment, she would never let me come to the elections again. And then farewell to all my fine hopes!"

"What the deuce were you doing at a dancing-school?"

"Eh! There was a reason for my going there."

"What reason? Come tell me all," anxiously said the judge, putting on his dressing-gown and his velvet cap.

"I was at the marshal's house," replied Burdyakin, "and they were urging me to present myself as a candidate for one of the judgeships. I did not wish to do so. I repulsed their offers, but they continued to promise me their votes, and I felt on the point of yielding. 'Bah!' I said to myself, 'I shall go to Khramikin's and talk about something else.' I arrive. I find him at home, and he says to me at once, 'Bravo! let's go to the dancing-school.'"

"So you went?"

"So we went. As he disposes of two votes, there is not much that one can refuse him in election time. The deuce knows to what school he took me! There was a great illumination and a lot of music, I know. It reminded me of my wedding, but my heart began beating in a very different manner, even in the ante-room. Ah! what a surprise; I beheld two lovely black eyes, and I was pressing my suit, when a big fellow with a stick came in; but—— Oh, dear! oh, dear! oh, dear! Ahi! ahi, ahi! Softly there! lah, lah!"

The servants were rubbing away with some ice at the ill-used

back of the poor captain-ispravnik. After the ice, he had some hot napkins applied to his bruised loins; then they drew on him a clean white shirt, and he fell asleep. Zazhmurin, having accurately divined what school his colleague had come from, allowed him to fall into a profound slumber, which, beneficial as it was, frustrated all his hopes of election, for he was obliged to keep his room for several days.

Our friend Pavel Ivanovitch Tchitchikoff, unlike the others, did not become agitated or discomposed by the elections. He went to bed like a genuine rustic, long before eleven o'clock. On the following morning, the 15th of September, he pulled on his trousers, washed himself in plenty of water, carefully rubbing down his face, his neck, his chest, and his arms. He had just donned his Tartar dressing-gown, when through the doorway, which his valet had left half open, he beheld the visage of his tailor's assistant, who was carefully carrying a light package enveloped in a large silk handkerchief.

"Is it ready?" inquired Tchitchikoff.

"Quite ready, sir," responded the tailor, putting down his bundle and extracting the pins.

"And it will become me?"

"It ought to," replied the artist.

Tchitchikoff now took off his dressing-gown and donned the uniform which the tailor had brought him. Placing himself in front of a mirror, he executed divers movements, after which he remarked that the coat was perhaps a trifle tight under the arms.

The tailor asserted, however, that it left nothing to be desired.

"Very well," said Tchitchikoff; "but look here, if I move like this and this, it impedes the action of my arms."

"The electors' assembly isn't a lake, sir, and you won't have to swim through it as if for your life in order to reach the shore; you will sit still there, like all the other nobles of your age."

"No doubt, no doubt," replied Tchitchikoff, somewhat mortified to think that he had assumed the airs of a shipwrecked mariner in the presence of his tailor. However, he could not refrain from trying on his three-cornered hat, and from saying, as he inspected it, "Faith, I look like a general in this uniform: don't you think so, my friend?"

"Dressed like this, you are a real general."

"Do you think so? And my face? Hey?"

"Exactly the face which suits a general, and not an ordinary general either."

"What? An ordinary general? Are there several sorts of generals, then?"

"Well, there is the American sort, sir."

"What nonsense! Where did you get the idea that we have American generals in Russia?"

"They are called so."

"Who is called so?"

"Why, the grandees, the high nobility, the noble lords who are the owners of great estates."

"You lie! Come, now; I can see that you are a great humbug."

"I say what I know, that is all, sir."

"Well, here is the price of your work. Did you cut and make it yourself?" he added, as he gazed at his figure in the glass.

"I did, sir."

"This money is for yourself?"

"No; it is for my master: if you will give me something for myself you will afford me great pleasure, sir."

"Here, then, take this, and go and have a drink of tea to my health." Thereupon our hero gave the fellow a silver rouble.

Once alone he assumed different poses in front of the mirror, saluted forwards, backwards, and obliquely, girded on his sword of state, drew on his gloves, and, as the weather was very fine, betook himself on foot to the assembly-house of the nobility.

The bell had been ringing for half an hour already, to sound the call to the elections; the nobles arrived in increasing numbers as the time passed by, and before the door stood some soldiers, who had been placed there as reinforcements for the city police, which was represented by five or six agents.

The house where the nobility assembled was full of noise. People were hurrying in and out. Acquaintances met and indulged in the national practice of hugging and kissing, which did not, however, exclude hand-shaking in the English fashion. In the great hall Tchitchikoff perceived, not without some surprise, a throng of men who were saluting not only their acquaintances, but even the strangers whom they now saw for the first time. Their air was quiet and respectful, not to say obsequious: their hair was smooth, and their chins freshly shaven. These gentlemen were the candidates for the higher magisterial offices in that province.

The marshal of the nobility of the province, dressed in the uniform of a gentleman of the bed-chamber to His Imperial Majesty, made his entrance, bowing courteously on all sides. He halted in the midst of the crowd, and conversed in a friendly way with the nobles of his acquaintance. The district marshals took it upon themselves to present to him the nobles of their districts. Meanwhile the chief marshal did not cease to bow, and he even gave his hand to some of the nobles as they passed him.

Tchitchikoff had not counted upon so signal an honour, so that he felt discomposed and surprised when the marshal offered him his hand with a good deal of warmth. His flattered self-esteem immediately became apparent in his walk, in the manner in which he carried his head, and in the air of his entire person. He fully understood how much he had gained in the eyes of all his country neighbours; indeed, all the nobles of his district

stared at him for several minutes, and some of them discovered that he possessed the physiognomy of a diplomat.

"Tell me," said one noble to another, "why did the marshal shake hands like that with Tchitchikoff?"

"It happened through absence of mind: it was chance, that is all."

"No, no! After giving him his hand, he raised his thick eyebrows; and I observed, that in looking at Tchitchikoff, as at a person whom one is glad to find at his post, he uttered a significant ah—ah—ah."

"Bah! it was accident, or chance."

"Accident doesn't explain anything."

"Well, how am I to know what you are asking about? I was looking up above, in the galleries."

"You, perhaps, have some acquaintances, relatives, here, looking for you?"

"Yes; but look at those ladies there. New arrivals surely, new arrivals. We never have anything like them here, even at fair-time. Look, look!"

"Fine objects for enthusiasm, I must say! Are we here to ogle the women? And to think that you have such a beauty of a wife!"

"What has that to do with the matter? A beauty, if you like, yes. But the canons don't forbid one admiring the unicorn and the adder also, and therefore I wish to admire those two ladies at closer range."

"Well, there he goes! What an idea! But I shall not endure this, and I shall go up-stairs to bring him back here."

While these two were chatting, the great majority of the nobility had gathered round the large table at which the governor was seated. He was a fine, handsome man: he saluted the assembly, and then, standing up, he delivered, as presiding officer, a speech brief and to the point, in which he announced the opening of the elections. He begged those present, first of all, to accompany him to church, in order to take the oath to preserve impartiality in the voting, and not to elect as magistrates any men who were not really worthy of exercising the functions.

The church was situated in the principal street, which presented a very animated aspect that day. Uniforms of all the branches of the service were visible, with carriages of all periods, filled with electors and candidates on their way to church between the thick motley ranks formed by the populace, some of whom gathered at the windows of the houses, even to the very dormer-windows in the attics.

The church, usually rather large for its purposes, seemed extremely small on this occasion.

After the ceremony of the oath, those who had taken part in it dispersed throughout the city, some of them to return home, others to hasten about and pay visits, and the majority to assure

themselves of a place at a good table, ready to take it by assault if it did not present itself voluntarily. This was a day of fine hopes for many. Many who had not breakfasted at all, and who had dined very badly, suddenly made a copious supper, and felt assured of an excellent dinner for several days to come.

On the following day, electoral business began by the reading of a list, arranged in alphabetical order, of all such nobles in the province who were, or who had been, in the hands of the law. After the proclamation of each name it was to be decided, by vote, whether the bearer might, or might not, have a right to take part in the election.

Tchitchikoff was present when this affecting perusal began, and he could no longer keep his seat. His impatience was so great, that several times he crept close to the secretary and looked over his shoulder at the list he was reading. Then, taking advantage of a momentary interruption, he asked the secretary, in a low voice, if he would reach the letter T before very long. The secretary courteously replied that he was just about to begin the reading of the names having T as their initial letter. On obtaining this information, Pavel Ivanovitch returned with anxiety to his seat, and said to his neighbours that a decayed tooth was causing him horrible suffering; that he had in vain hoped that the pain would cease; that he realised the necessity of having it extracted; and that, in any case, he could not remain amid so many draughts. Accordingly he left the hall, and on arriving at his inn he threw himself on to his bed, pending the serving of some pickled sturgeon, which he had ordered that morning to be ready at four o'clock.

Half an hour at least had elapsed after Tchitchikoff's departure before the letter T was reached. The first name called was that of a sub-lieutenant, A. P. Tchuvirin, who had been tried for appropriating citizen Krovopatkin's cow by violence. The court had acquitted Tchuvirin.

"Let him vote!" cried a number of voices.

G. P. Tchernoff, collegiate secretary, had been accused of defrauding the brandy revenues, and of having cruelly beaten the collector. Acquitted on the first charge, he had been condemned on the second to damages, as reparation for the man who had been beaten, and also to three days' arrest.

"Let him vote!" was the cry, as in the preceding case.

Ivan Borisovitch Tchimazoff, titular councillor, had been accused of cutting wood on crown land.

"Crown land! Exclude him! exclude him!" cried a hundred voices at once, with an accent of wrath.

"Ivan Stepanitch Tzelikoff, collegiate assessor," now read the secretary, "has been tried in court for having discharged a loaded firearm in the middle of the public square."

"What! Tzelikoff discharged a loaded gun?" said a gentleman with curled hair, in a vivacious manner. "Positively loaded?"

"There is no doubt but that the gun was loaded," said another person.

"Well, if the gun was not loaded, it was not possible to fire it," remarked a third.

"Li-i-i-tle bo-o-o-y-s so-o-o-meti-i-i-mes b-b-burn pri-i-i-ming for fun," said a gentleman who stammered in a very painful manner.

"Why did not the secretary finish his sentence?" now asked a noble with leaden eyes and closely cropped hair. "Did Tzelikoff kill anyone with his loaded gun?" he added in a tone of alarm.

"You are requested to be silent."

"Pray, who regulates the discussion here? I ask whether Tzelikoff killed or wounded anyone?"

The uproar was increasing every moment.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen! Silence, I beseech you," said the marshal of the province, gently.

"I know all about it myself. I was present. Yes, indeed! he wounded my dog," began a portly gentleman, who had a remarkable tuft of hair on his right cheek.

"By this discharge——" read the secretary, making an effort to continue his perusal.

"Listen, Piotr Feodorovitch, listen! That shot of Tzelikoff's is being explained."

"What? How? One can't hear anything."

"Yes, the hubbub is going to begin now; the whole orchestra is tuning its instruments."

"Speak louder, secretary, and proceed. Ahi! ahi! there's somebody treading on my cursed corn again! Who goes there? Ahi! ahi! What a rude lout! He does not even apologise."

"By this shot," now resumed the secretary, pitching his voice an octave higher, "he inflicted mortal terror upon a lady who was passing by. This lady was the wife of Mr. Shukin, the inspector of police of that district; and in consequence of her fright, this lady, on reaching her home——"

"Ah! If she died, that settles about the shot," interrupted one of the nobles.

"In the name of heaven, gentlemen, listen, and do not interrupt!" exclaimed another.

"On reaching home," continued the secretary, "she took to her bed, and give birth to two children, who proved to be of the male sex."

Great laughter now burst forth. "Very good. But how about the mother?"

"The mother and her children are in the best possible health. As a result of the investigation which followed, Tzelikoff was exonerated from all responsibility."

"Let him vote, then!" was the cry on all sides.

"It would be too severe to deprive this man of his rights as an elector. He has suggested a new means of assisting nature."

"What you say is quite true. And, by the way, how is your mare? Has she foaled?"

"Oh! I have sold her to a horse-dealer. But you have not heard of the adventure?"

"Silence, silence there!" shouted an usher.

"Pavel Ivanovitch Tchitchikoff, councillor of state," now read the secretary, "accused of forgery in connection with a will."

"Ah! for a nobleman that is rather bad. Exclude him! exclude him!"

"Hey? W-w-w-hat? H-h-how?" said the noble with the painful stammer. "F-f-f-f-f-for-gery in precious stones and di-di-di-di-a-monds?"

"Are you deaf?" retorted a neighbour. "You were told, for forgery in connection with a will."

"Ha, ha! I un-understand it. Vari-ous messes. In the e-e-e-lec-tions? But how did it con-con-cern the tri-tri-bu-nals?" resumed the stammering gentleman, who was a bit of a fool.

"Hush-sh-sh-sh! Silence I beg of you!" now said the marshal of the province.

"Accused of forgery, in connection with a will, and of having purchased from divers noble owners of inhabited estates a number of deceased peasant-serfs, dead souls, with and without the land they occupied. After due investigation, however, Pavel Ivanovitch Tchitchikoff was released as not guilty."

"What? What? Dead souls?"

"Yes, he was accused of having *purchased* dead souls—something absurd, eh?"

"Wh-wh-a-at? He pur-pur-chased the-e-c will of a de-de-ad wo-wo-man?" said the deaf gentleman who stammered.

"Ah, my dear sir, how tiresome you are! Why, open your ears! I answer you for the last time: he purchased some thousands of dead souls."

"Did you say *dead* souls? Ah, good heavens! it is impossible to hear; it is a perfect Babel here."

"How scandalous! I shall take my departure; the secretary reads one thing, and then the people talk of another."

"Not at all. This is the exact fact: he appropriated a large inheritance, and purchased several ancient cemeteries with the money."

"Impossible!"

"Read the passage again! Read it again!" cried a large portion of the noble assemblage. "And come nearer to us. Here, here; this is a good place; it is the exact centre of the hall."

"No, no," shouted the others; "more to the right, to the right; that's the real centre; here, nearer us."

The secretary placed himself in the very centre of the hall;

then he coughed, and began to read anew. "Pavel Ivanovitch Tchitchikoff, councillor of state, accused of forgery in connection with a will, and accused of having purchased from divers noble owners a number of deceased peasant-serfs—*dead souls*."

At these words frightful uproar and confusion ensued. Most of the electors rose to their feet.

"This is strange news!" cried one.

"Crime upon crime!" exclaimed another.

"What an abomination!"

"This man is an adventurer, a speculator—that's what he is!"

"Oh, but what an idea that is of disinterring the dead!"

"Did he mean to make bone-black out of them?"

"Was it ever discovered what he intended to do with those bones and corpses?"

"I think that saltpetre can be made from tombs; and the bones would yield ashes which might certainly be utilised in commerce: for my part——"

"What horrors that man is uttering! It is a case, a case, such a case, you see, as no one ever imagined. When I tell my wife about this she will say that I am lying."

"Why tell her about it then? Why incur a scolding? What is the use of seeking quarrels? Don't little spars arise of themselves without that? I shall not say a word to my wife about this abominable affair."

"Well, I shall tell it all to mine; otherwise she will hear of it from someone else, and that will furnish her with a good pretext for a quarrel."

"But why did he purchase the dead souls?"

The chief marshal had preserved his patience up to this point; but realising that this case must be disposed of, he armed himself with his bell, and rang it until the most complete silence was established; then he said to the assembly: "Gentlemen, there appears to be a difference of opinion as to whether this gentleman shall be admitted into the assembly. Will you resort to the ballot?"

"Yes, yes; very good."

"Now is the time, or never."

"The ballot, the ballot!"

The balls were brought, and they proceeded to the ballot.

"Ah, how I should like to see that fellow Tchitchikoff and judge his face, his personal appearance, his manners!"

"He certainly must look like a sharper and rascal—like an undertaker's man at the least."

"Not at all: everyone was saying yesterday that he is still a young man, rather plump, with a rosy complexion, fine bearing, and of good style."

"It is said that he has served in the Imperial Guards."

"Tchitchikoff? Really? Come, tell us, Trofim Petrovitch; since he belongs to your district you must know him."

"No, I don't; he's not known in our district; there is no person of that name there."

"He was an agent for the settlement of disputed claims in Siberia."

"Well, we must find out from what district he comes: but of whom can we inquire?"

"Oh! he came here straight from Kamtchatka, riding on a reindeer."

"Ha! ha! ha!"

"I tell you that it is a very grave case."

"Tchetchelkoff, Tchetchelkoff!" soliloquised one gentleman. "What funny names one encounters in the world nowadays! And so trading in dead souls leads to nobility! Bravissimo! How great is our good mother Russia! She contains all sorts of people naturally, and all kinds of industries and trades are plied within her. And now we have this fellow Tchetchelkoff."

"What do you mean by your Tchetchelkoff?" interrupted a neighbour. "Who and what is Tchetchelkoff? The name has been read to you a score of times plainly enough; it is Tchetchanin, and not Tchetchelkoff at all: it enrages me to hear proper names mutilated."

"Pooh! pooh!" burst in another person. "The real name is Tchitchikoff. Mr. Tchitchikoff is here, here in this very hall. He has a fine appearance; and the general expression of his face is of a kind to inspire, or at least it has the reputation of inspiring——"

"Very good, very good, Vasiliy Lukitch!" shouted yet a fourth noble. "Oh heavens! when that fellow undertakes to talk, and, above all, to analyse, there is never any end to it."

An uncle and a nephew, who were seated side by side, now joined in the chatter.

"Admit him, admit him!" said the nephew. "Mr. Tchitchikoff must be admitted! He *purchased*, and since he purchased that signifies that he paid for, his souls. If, instead of buying them, he had robbed, carried off, stolen—then it would be necessary to exclude him and to prosecute him."

"No doubt," rejoined the uncle. "And we should demand that he be stripped of his title of noble."

At this moment a third person stepped up to the uncle and the nephew. He was a short, wrinkled old man in an ancient naval uniform, with a worn embroidered collar. His whole face was covered with perspiration, and his grey hair was plastered down on his temples. This old sea-dog seemed very agitated. He had already searched every corner of the room; he had now reached the centre of it, and his eyes roved in every direction. On approaching the people of whom we have spoken he said with a preoccupied, serious air: "Gentlemen, will you have the great kindness to tell me what price Tchitchikoff paid for a dead soul—I mean his average price?"

"Seven roubles and seventy-five copecks, paper money," gravely replied a stout gentleman, as he held a huge silver snuff-box under his nose, and regaled himself methodically and delightedly with pinches of the aromatic powder.

"Of the male sex, or the other?"

"Both—male and female."

The mariner's face lighted up; then he assumed an air of mystery, and added—

"Did he merely purchase grown-up persons, or did he take children as well?"

"I have told you what he did: he bought souls. You ought to know what souls are."*

"Yes—but just one word. Will you have the kindness to point out this Tchitchikoff to me, or to tell me where he is to be found at the present moment—in what part of the hall?"

"Stay, look yonder, there—there against the pillar at the corner of the gallery. You see that tall, thin, ugly man, with long, whitish, untidy hair, and tortoise-shell spectacles? He has a face easily noticed, and he's Tchitchikoff."

The naval officer gave a leap like a kid, and then he went off at so violent and ungovernable a pace that he flung two heavy gentlemen flat on the floor, overturned three arm-chairs, upset numerous benches, and at length reached the unkempt man with the tortoise-shell spectacles. Having seized him convulsively by the arms and dragged him to a deserted corner, the naval officer addressed him with a great many bows, accompanying each of his words with abrupt movements of his arms, eyelids, and head. However, the unkempt man smiled with a scornful air, surveyed the eloquent ancient mariner from head to foot, thrust out his under lip, and shrugged his thin shoulders.

"Seriously, then, you are not Tchitchikoff?" urged the retired officer.

"Pray, do me the honour to tell me what *you* want of me. I have not the honour of knowing you. Excuse me." And then the fellow with the tumbled hair made a movement as if about to depart.

"No, no, you shall not thus escape me, noble and generous Tchitchikoff!" exclaimed the ancient mariner. "You must purchase my one hundred and forty souls, of both sexes, who died of cholera: you must indemnify me, at least in part, for that

* The ex-officer's question was a very natural one. In Russia, only male serfs were counted as *souls*, but this did not prevent the landowners from deriving a very good revenue also from the female serfs on their estates, to whom they gave permission to go to the towns and support themselves there by their work, in consideration of their paying a stipulated sum [*obrok*]. These women have been known to pay more than their fathers, brothers, or husbands, rather than return to the village. The children were not required to pay any *obrok* until they grew up, but they were employed in a great many little services which grown men could not perform. It was only the children, without regard to their sex, who were of no account in the eyes of the tax-collectors.

cruel loss. Give an old mariner, his sons, and grandchildre due cause to bless your name for ever."

"Will you please to leave me alone!" said the unkempt man "What the deuce do you mean by all the ridiculous things tha you are saying to me?"

"Everyone seeks his own advantage: that is quite natural I have so much respect for the traffic which you have engage in, and I regard it as so perfectly legitimate, that I am willin to deduct twenty-five copecks from the price which you usuall give for each dead soul, simply so as to enjoy the pleasure o assisting in the success of your operations in the measure of m means."

"Once more," retorted the unkempt gentleman, "I beg of yo to cease your raillery. Do not force me to say harsh things to you."

"I certainly have no occasion to expect the least coarse wor from so wise a man as yourself. Let us strike the bargain her between ourselves; as for the contract and the money, I will g to your house with you."

"Oh! you will, will you?"

"Yes; don't feel at all uneasy about that. I shall have n difficulty in finding your house; I should even find it were i situated at the bottom of the sea. And so my honourable frien Pavel——"

This private colloquy was at this moment interrupted by th silence which suddenly prevailed throughout the hall. Th secretary proclaimed the result of the voting.

"The ballot which has just taken place with reference t Pavel Ivanovitch Tchitchikoff, councillor of state, has resulte in the maintenance of his right, by 499 ayes against 87 noes Mr. Tchitchikoff is admitted as a member of the assembly by majority of 412 votes."

"I congratulate you!" said the naval officer, turning to th unkempt gentleman.

"May the devil confound you!" replied the latter, and h hurriedly made off through the different groups of bystanders.

The reading of the list was then resumed, and concluded i half an hour's time. Several propositions were then submitte to the assembly. Some of these proposals offered an occasio for a great deal of uproar, and the voices raised within the ha became audible outside. All the members who had contrived t appease their stomachs with a breakfast, without their absenc having been noticed, held out. At each proposition, many sti shouted and declaimed *pro* and *contra* at random. Some, *apropo* of nothing, demanded a ballot. However, all ended by feelin the prick of hunger, and were charmed to hear the governo adjourn the deliberations upon the seven or eight propositions which still remained to be discussed until the close of the elections In fact, the actual, final resolution was, that the secretary was t be allowed full liberty in all these matters.

There is one good thing about these days of electoral assemblies —a man is able, if not always to obtain certain satisfaction for his self-love, at least to feast, and find relaxation from his ordinary cares. Very few gentlemen are to be met with who do not end by unreservedly signing everything that the secretary of the nobility presents to them, everything which he prepares, or means to prepare, upon numerous sheets of paper, without caring to hamper his agile pen, or even to spoil his appetite by annoying subtleties.

That evening our hero felt infinitely better than he had felt at the assembly. It is to be supposed that three helps of the pickled sturgeon and a bottle of old *Chateau Larose*, which he absorbed in order to get rid of the boredom consequent upon several hours of solitude, had a salutary effect upon his maxillary nerve; at all events, he had no occasion to place himself in the hands of any dentist. He took his round hat and a long, wadded surtout, and set out lounging about the streets, with a handsome Indian cane in his hand. All the houses in the town, all the lodgings, good or bad, the smallest chambers, the pettiest garden-pavilions, were filled to overflowing; the hostelries and restaurants were glittering with lights; their doors were fairly besieged with carriages, both public and private, of all sizes, shapes, and names. The so-called harmony of itinerant orchestras, composed of foreign artists, mostly Bohemians, rang out intrepidly and with impunity from several halls. The nobility were spending their gold in costly breakfasts and dinners. Excepting one or two highly renowned vintages, the only wine absorbed was champagne; whilst the only water partaken of was the famous natural seltzer water. Whilst they ate and drank to excess, proposing toasts of great originality, a vast quantity of promises to treat So-and-so with black balls, and the host of the day with white ones, burst forth as though bubbling from the heart. Vain words, forgotten as soon as uttered! On the following day the balls were dropped according to the impulse or the caprice of the moment, according to the influence of connections or the strength of parties, which became more sharply outlined at the decisive moment.

"At the last elections," said Burdyakin to a friend at the street-corner, "the late So-and-so gave a third person the support which he had promised to me that very morning. He did not like to see me elected to that modest office. However, God punished him for his rascality: he died five months after his treachery."

"One thing is certain," replied the other, "that not one hair of our heads falls without the will of God. But to-day you want to become a judge; well, what shall you do in that office?"

"I? The first thing I shall do will be to attend to the things which my predecessor wrongfully neglected. As a preliminary step, I shall purify the audience chamber; and it is only after

having had all parts of the place properly blessed, that I shall show myself. And you may be sure that I shan't listen to anyone, but act entirely on my own judgment."

"According to your own judgment—h'm! Yes, if Ivan Feodorovitch will allow it."

"Ivan Feodorovitch has no chance whatever of being chosen marshal."

"May heaven hear you! But let us go into that café there—the evening dew is falling; I am shivering."

"You call that a café! Why it is a tavern, not to say a cavern. There are twenty brawlers in there, gorging themselves with champagne, while three merry girls, in very low dresses, play on the harp and sing to them, God only knows what sprightly songs. To think that those wretched fellows are all married men, and yet they sit there devouring those women with their eyes! And fancy, they were not ashamed to invite me!"

"And you?"

"Well, I looked in just to see what was going on there, and then I speedily stole away. Would you believe it, that many persons, in consequence of this permanent orgy, will be forced to set out for their villages after this evening? They had brought with them enough money to live on for a month or more, but in three days they are drained dry, and now they say that unforeseen circumstances recall them home as speedily as possible."

"Ah, good evening, Pavel Ivanovitch," said Burdyakin at this moment to Tchitchikoff, who happened to come along. "You were at the assembly to-day?" he continued, looking intently at our hero.

"Yes, I spent two hours there. I had taken a toothache there with me, and the draughts increased it to such a degree that I was obliged to return to my inn."

"I also went to the assembly, in spite of a very bad cold, but I went later on, so that I did not meet you. Just imagine, they mentioned your affairs, your trial—a lot of nonsense, in fact."

"Indeed! what was it?" said Tchitchikoff, ignoring the fact that anything could have been said to his disadvantage.

"Why, some trial which you underwent was mentioned; and although it was said that you had been released, they laughed and talked and railed at you. After all, the nobility doesn't wish you ill. So as to uphold you, I went from one person to another through the hall, talking, insisting, flattering, beseeching, and promising; and, by my faith, I succeeded; your electoral rights were recognised by a large majority of votes."

"Well, I never suspected anything of the sort," said our hero.

"Listen: let me advise you, between ourselves, to come forward boldly as a candidate for the marshalship. Believe me, your district is very well disposed towards you at the present moment, and you will be elected."

"I don't aspire to that office; it makes one lead a bustling, restless life," said Tchitchikoff aloud, but all the while he thought to himself, "That would be very flattering."

"Yes, indeed! Well, Pavel Ivanovitch, that is a very wise course of yours; don't put yourself forward; you are, and will remain, a remarkably sensible man, not only in your own district but throughout the province. Look at Zazhmurin: what does he lack? A good fever, perhaps; at all events, he is rich and intelligent, and expert in rural management. But, no matter; here he is burning to become marshal. He has been warned that he will be black-balled, but he won't listen to anything. He hopes on, and do you know why? This is the way he calculates. Oh, he's a cunning fellow! To-morrow and the day after are to be devoted to the solution of a multitude of questions; the third day is Sunday; then the arrival of several gentlemen from all the districts is expected. In these three days many of the people already here will have expended all the money they had brought with them on cards, drinks, feasts, and orgies, and then they will recollect that Zazhmurin has a pocket well padded with bills of credit.* He will lend them money at six per cent. on good notes guaranteed by the most solvent among them; and, more than that, he will make the borrowers swear on their honour to vote for him. And yet, I ask you, how can a pig's snout like that man aspire to be marshal of the nobility?"

"He impresses me as an honest man, and I don't see why he should be driven to purchase votes," remarked our hero.

"Well, pray do me the pleasure of dropping in a black ball for him, and in my opinion you ought to do the same for everyone except Melekitchentzoff. As for myself, the general desire has obliged me to come forward as a candidate for a judgeship; these are grave functions. It is a terrible thing to judge one's fellow-men when one knows that at the last judgment one will have to render an account of one's decisions, and yet I have made up my mind to it; and I shall be an exemplary magistrate, you may depend upon that."

"It will be very meritorious on your part," said our hero. "But what sort of a man is this Melekitchentzoff of yours?"

"A millionaire! That is the man who ought to be elected. That is the man who will make an accomplished marshal. Do you know, he has promised to give a great dinner, where he will regale everyone with Dutch milk? I am acquainted with Dutch cheese, and I am very fond of it. So, for that reason alone, I have decided to assist him in becoming marshal of the district. My wife is very fond of Dutch cheese, and my eldest daughter also; but milk, the real Dutch milk, that's a thing that neither I nor my wife nor my children have ever tasted.

* At that period certain bills of credit circulated throughout Russia just like bank-notes.

Well, Melekitchentzoff has brought some from the Low Countries —a hogshead, a large hogshead of it—and, just imagine it, he has brought it in his carriage!"

"It is of Viktor Apollonovitch that you are speaking, surely?" said a gentleman with a shrill voice, who had just halted behind Burdyakin.

"Yes, of Melekitchentzoff, certainly."

"But what is this milk of which you were just speaking?"

"Milk, what? Why, milk, Dutch milk."

"That isn't milk at all; you have been misled. It isn't milk, but whey; and not common Dutch whey, but what is called Amsterdam whey. I have tasted it."

"Don't believe him, Pavel Ivanovitch; he's lying. Well, let us see if you have tasted it," resumed the captain-ispravnik; "tell us what it tastes like, and what effect it has on the stomach."

"That's a fine question to ask! The whey which Viktor Apollonovitch has brought is acid and bitter, salt and sweetish, at one and the same time."

"I suspected as much; ah, ah, ah! the jokers! they have made him swallow some sea-water. Water, water, I tell you; it was salt water—that's what it was. I must tell you that Melekitchentzoff has brought with him from the west a number of men, birds, fish, and divers objects; among other things, he brought some very small shell-fish, which are called mussels, I believe, to treat the poor pupils at a school in which he takes an interest. Oh, what a fine thing it is to be rich! Well, in order to keep these shell-fish fresh, they had to be preserved in salt water; and it is probably that water, which the prince's servants, at his request, made this gentleman drink. He has swallowed a jarful of salt water, spoonful by spoonful. That's what he knows about Dutch milk. Come, now, my dear fellow."

"Come, yourself! The custom-house wouldn't allow salt water to pass?"

"And why not? it is for use; the doctor has prescribed sea-water for me to drink. I can drink nothing else, so the custom-house allows it to pass; it must allow it."

"It may be as you say; so be it. But let us discuss serious matters. Did you know that in the assembly they wanted to elect me as assessor of the court of this district? The proposal is very disagreeable to me—oh, very disagreeable, indeed! I begged of them, and prayed of them, not to think of it; but no, they wouldn't listen to me. They will force my nomination upon me, the wretches!" At this point the drinker of sea-water suddenly drew the captain-ispravnik on one side, to ask him "Pray, who is this gentleman whom you have with you?"

"That is Pavel Ivanovitch Tchitchikoff; he can dispose of two votes, and holds two more in reserve."

"Permit me, sir," now said the candidate for the office of assessor, in a honeyed voice, "permit me to introduce myself

to you: I am the governmental secretary, Tchyerin; my lands lie in your district; I am a neighbour of Mr. Burdyakin"; and here he walked towards Tchitchikoff.

"I am much flattered, sir," responded Tchitchikoff, while he walked on in front of him.

"Until to-day I have not been bold enough to introduce myself to you; excuse my thus accosting you with a request. When they vote for me—my name is Tchyerin—when they vote for me, black-ball me. Yes, I beg of you, black-ball me. No doubt I should be, on every occasion and wholly, at the command of the nobility if I were elected. I should cherish no other ambition than that of trying to please every gentleman belonging to our set; but, nevertheless, you will oblige me, and that greatly, if you will kindly vote against me."

"If the other persons who know you esteem you worthy of the post of assessor, I shall not vote differently to the nobility of the district; indeed, I shall vote in your favour if the other people do so."

"As you please; at all events, receive the homage of my respectful devotion."

After speaking these words, this solicitor ran off to pay his court elsewhere. Tchitchikoff glanced to right and to left, and no longer saw him anywhere.

"What sort of a fellow is this Tchyerin, your neighbour in the country?" he asked Burdyakin.

"A passed-master in card-playing. Oh, he never fears sharpers, whoever they may be."

"Then he himself is a little bit in that line?"

"Yes, he is; so put in a black ball for him, and another black one for Kostlyakin also."

"Who is Kostlyakin?"

"A landowner, nothing more. I wanted to marry his daughter with a brother of my wife's, a fine fellow, who had just been promoted to the rank of lieutenant, and had already been promised a troop. Well, Kostlyakin had the effrontery to reply to the young man's request, 'Begin by getting the troop, and then come and make your proposal to me.' Can anyone conceive it—such an animal refusing to ally his family with mine? Black-ball Vuirkin also. As for Yerebnikoff, take care! He is a ferret; distrust him, and black-ball him, too. Kryaplin, too, ought to have a good black ball; however, do as you think fit about him. Stay, I have two other friends—Ivan Telkin and Piotr Telkin, two cousins, against one of whom I strongly recommend you to cast black balls."

"Well, I shall have a hard time of it; you have mentioned seven or eight people to me, and I really fear that I shall make some mistake."

"Do you wish to render me a service?"

"I desire it greatly."

"Well, listen! Each time that you receive your balls from the hand of the marshal, hand them to me, and I will deposit them according to your desires, as one's oath, honour, and conscience require."

"Well, we will see about it."

"Good evening, Pavel Ivanovitch."

"Adieu."

"What is the matter with them all?" said Tchitchikoff to himself, as he re-entered his chamber at the inn; "why are they thus excited? One finds nothing but lying, fraud, and hypocrisy at every step. The elections are useful in many respects, as a privilege conferred on the nobility; but in the practice, in the exercise of the right, there is a little too much perfidy and malignity. I am not ambitious of any office, certainly; I only came here to divert my mind from my occupations as a landowner, and I find nothing but worry. Instead of remaining here any longer, I should do better to go and busy myself about the welfare of my peasants, the education of my young family, and many other things which would prove beneficial either to me, or my family, when I am gone. I must be honest; that accursed ambition, or rather that petty vanity, always oppresses my heart, after creeping in to it like a serpent. It is only too true, that I should like to be elected marshal of the nobility of our district. It seems that that is the goal of a noble's desires, and all these parties and intrigues are due to it. Whatever I do or say, it seems as though someone were every moment urging me on, and shouting in my ears, 'Announce yourself as a candidate; try, try! perhaps you will succeed!' One unhappy man has undermined his whole fortune for the sake of collecting the nobility at his house; he is ruining himself, and all his family, by his extravagant expenditure. Still he never gets discouraged, but hopes to be elected marshal in spite of all the affronts and discomfitures he meets with. There are also a great many aspirants this year, and very few offices to be filled up. Ought not I to postpone my candidature until the next election? But no: three years are three centuries! Shall I be alive and in health three years hence? I should like to serve as marshal for eight or nine months, or a year at the most; then I would hand in a peremptory resignation; that would be the thing. Oh! if I could only have the pleasure of signing my name, in my clear, firm handwriting, on patents of nobility, or on a circular addressed to all my noble electors!"

Tchitchikoff was so engrossed with this last idea that, without thinking, he placed a sheet of paper before him, seized a pen, and wrote with one sweep of the hand in magisterial, flowing calligraphy, "Tchitchikoff, Marshal of the Nobility." Then he glanced about him, twisted the paper up, burned it in the flame of his candle, and thought, as he took off his clothes, "What a miserable creature is man! After many tempests, I have entered

a haven of safety, but my heart and my imagination have followed me into it; and in the absence of real troubles coming from without, I create for myself, by my own fancy, subjects of irritation and false hopes, which do not allow me to taste the sweets of repose."

Three days elapsed, and the noisy elections for the district began. The streets were crowded from sunrise by equipages coming and going, filled, most of them, too, to excess, with members of the country nobility, in their grand uniforms. Some even went modestly on foot to each other's houses; and when men who were tolerably sure of each other met, they alighted from their carriages or halted and exchanged embraces. They could be seen saluting each other at fabulous distances, and the most flattering hopes were depicted on their faces.

The turmoil aroused Tchitchikoff long before his ordinary hour of rising; he hastened to his window, and amused himself with watching an enormous britchka, drawn by two horses with long, badly-groomed coats, and containing five portly gentlemen in full dress.

"Generals, upon my word! all generals to-day! It's a regular invasion of generals," said he; then, having donned his own gala attire, he studied two or three noble attitudes before his mirror, and with his arms crossed on his breast and his head borne loftily, though slightly upon one side, he said with much assurance and in a loud tone of voice, "I know nothing about the others; let people look at us all, and decide for themselves. There are no doubt some wealthy men in this motley throng, men who are cultivated in mind, and handsome in person; but I—I alone, probably, realise the ideal of a general—*an American general.*" And tears, due to egotistical tenderness and of a vague uneasiness, bathed the rosy cheeks of our hero; while he said to himself, "Lord God, what is it that is taking place within me? Why these tears? It is my accursed ambition which weeps, knowing that it cannot be gratified. This ambition is a worm, gnawing at my heart, surfeiting itself upon my blood, living on me and in me, and which will only die when I die; to curse it is equivalent to cursing myself."

Tchitchikoff then entered his carriage, and drove to the assembly. On the way he was stared at, for he was not one of those men who never have a thought depicted on their brows. He was especially noticed by the populace, because he distanced not only the pedestrians, but all the other carriages. Half of the street and three-quarters of the grand square were encumbered with vehicles.

The soldiers had the greatest difficulty in calming the excitement of the drivers, Tartars or Mongolians, who from the elevation of their boxes, still lead, at least as coachmen, that proud Russian aristocracy in which so many of their ancient princes figure. Perched on their high seats, they rise above

all the general populace—the common herd, the promiscuous throng of nobles, the artisans, the clerks, the citizens, and the rustics alike.

"Hey, there, you big beard! To the left, to the left! and don't leave the line. Well, don't you hear me?" shouted one of those quellers of disorder known as the blue dragoons.

"We know what we are about," retorted the son of Mamaï,* who was thus addressed. "We have driven through Moscow and Petersburg, and you can't frighten us, comrade."

"Come, come! no arguing, unless you want to feel the flat of my sword."

"Just try it on! My master, there within, is already three-quarters elected marshal. And yet, you spurred lout, you lay down the law like a commander-in-chief! What sort of a bird are you, I should like to know? We have our plate laid at the governor's table. My master will tell him. Hallo! what are you hitting me for? Stop! listen! Leave me alone! Will you let me be, you madman? I'll leave the box, and the horses, and the carriage! How dare you strike me?" Then the coachman called, turning towards his master, "Sir! Hey, sir!" And again confronting the dragoon: "There, that's enough. Where would you like me to re-enter the line? Will you cease pestering me? Just see how you have treated my *tchekmen*,† which belongs to my master. Hum! It's disgusting how you beat and ill-treat people."

Several soldiers and drivers had little asides of this nature on various points. Meanwhile, inside the hall the balloting began. Podgruzdyoff having announced his definite resignation of the office of marshal, votes were given in turn for three candidates who had brought themselves forward, and who were summarily rejected by black-balling. A compact party then advanced to vote for Melekitchentzoff, in Podgruzdyoff's place, and the immense majority feeling discontented, observed that there was nobody to oppose him likely to have any chance whatever.

Tchitchikoff remained modestly leaning against a pillar, the devouring worm of ambition gnawing painfully at his heart. Everything was left in suspense for several minutes in default of a competitor to oppose this wealthy candidate, Melekitchentzoff, who was already casting patronising and triumphant glances upon his supporters, and leering tenderly at the curule chair of the marshalate. Our hero meanwhile said to himself, "Oh, it would have been a thousand times better if I had gone on a round of visits to Betrishtcheff's relatives, rather than have come here and subjected myself to all this torture. I have suffered a great deal in my life; still, I have enjoyed some happy days.

* The expression "son of Mamaï," means a Tartar. Mamaï was the leader of one of the Tartar incursions in the Middle Ages (1380), and his name is preserved in history. His exploits are also celebrated in the Russian epic songs.

† Cossack coat.

This is my harshest trial. Would it not be best for me to go and announce myself openly as a candidate? Good God! What, won't anyone come and say to me, 'Will you be pleased to accept nomination?' Let them talk to me about my likeness to an American general after this! I have allowed myself to be caught with the raillery of a tailor! I'll just see if a single person will come. O dead souls! dead souls! you have enriched me without elevating me, and it is you who are now about to complete my abasement and my ruin!"

Tchitchikoff was raving. He really was in despair, when all at once, three gentlemen belonging to his district approached him, and proposed to him that he should present himself as a candidate. Our hero could not reply at first, so overwhelmed did he feel; then he hesitated, and it was only at the expiration of several minutes that he was able to pronounce with some decision the following honest and pathetic words:

"Divine providence, in sending me through you such an unexpected honour, seems desirous of wiping out all trace of the injustice which I have experienced in the pilgrimage of life. Gentlemen, you cannot be ignorant of the fact that my existence long resembled the condition of a vessel buffeted by storms. You propose trusting to me the helm of the vessel of your interests. You place too much value possibly on the little wisdom with which experience may have endowed me. However, I perceive in this an opportunity for self-sacrifice, and I will not hesitate. Dispose of me."

Thereupon he shed a few tears, and crumpled his three-cornered hat with both hands; then, obviously much agitated, he passed into an apartment adjoining the grand hall.

The voting for the candidates was immediately proceeded with, and this operation did not last long.

As soon as the voting was finished, there arose from all quarters of the hall a loud and general shout, amid which one plainly heard the words, "We congratulate you!"

"It's all over," thought Tchitchikoff, wiping his brow, which was quite moist with emotion. "The honours have fallen to me, and my heart is relieved of an immense weight." And his bearing as he re-entered the hall evinced what a lively sentiment of personal dignity he felt at that moment.

"Gentlemen," he said to the throng which watched him as he passed along, "I thank you cordially for an election which cannot be otherwise than flattering to me from every point of view. But I have many reasons for begging you, for adjuring you, to exempt me from this noble office at least for three years, in order that I may become more firmly settled in this part of the country, where approbation will always be so precious to me."

Pavel Ivanovitch, having delivered himself to this effect, bent his head slightly towards his left shoulder, brought both hands together on his breast, and awaited a reply.

Prince Tchigirin, a man of lofty stature, renowned for his overwhelming blows, who chanced to stand at about ten paces from Tchitchikoff, then exclaimed in a very fine baritone voice :—

"Mr. Tchitchikoff is wrong in thus alarming himself. Gentlemen, pray have the charity to explain to him that he came out third or fourth in the list, and that he is excused from discharging the functions in question, not for three years only, but for fifteen or perhaps eighteen."

Prince Tchigirin was not a competitor; he himself did not wish to be marshal; but on the other hand he could not endure the thought that anyone else should aspire to the office, unless he were a prince, or at least a triple millionaire.

Soon afterwards Melekitchentzoff sought out Tchitchikoff, for he wished to invite him to dinner, and to regale him with a dish of herring-roe such as could only be found at his table. However, our hero had disappeared from the hall, and three hours later he was taking tea in a posting-house situated twenty-one versts from town, and listening to the overture of *Lodoiska*, executed by a musical snuff-box, which had constituted the delight of the superintendent of this station for the last twenty-five years. Our hero greatly envied the contentment of this worthy simple man, who, in order to render himself happy, had only to rummage in his pocket and press a small leather button.

"And I," thought he, "what do I lack to be happy? Nothing that a man can reasonably desire. Accursed vanity, what wilt thou of me? However, the lesson which I have just received ought at last to teach me to restrain the impetuosity of my ambitious aspirations."

Such was the style of his thoughts when he resumed his journey to return to the bosom of his numerous family. He had been married for twelve years, and he had eleven children, who had always been the freest and the happiest children in the world. We will not say the same for the fourteen hundred families of serfs of which our hero was the lord and master, and for whom it cannot be asserted that he always entertained the feelings of a father. The only persons with regard to whom he was always inclined to passive indulgence were Selifan and Petrushka. They died shortly after their master's great discomfiture at the elections, possibly in consequence of the profound chagrin caused by the preference, more apparent than real, which Tchitchikoff accorded to the valet and coachman who had accompanied him to town on that occasion. He had, in his character of master, some principles from which he never departed. As he despised tale-bearers, he never punished any faults of which he had not himself been a witness, or by which he had not personally suffered; but then he punished severely, without pausing to consider the degree of gravity of the offence. An imposter, a thief, a drunkard, a libertine, had only to avoid ever coming in Tchitchikoff's way, to appear perfectly innocent in his eyes, however detestable his

reputation might be; but if one of his peasants told him a lie in person, or if one of them passed him on his way from the forest with a load of purloined brushwood on his back; if a third, in replying to him, gave vent to an alcoholic hiccough, or if he caught sight of a fourth courting a village maid in unseemly fashion, even were she his betrothed, then it made no difference—all four were mercilessly condemned to be flogged.

Very few of his peasants were allowed the means of attaining to a state of comfort. Still, some of them, in spite of the thousand obstacles inherent to their condition of serfage, became fairly well off, and besought him to give them their freedom on condition of payment. He invariably refused, without alleging any reason for this course; and he never even consented to allow their daughters to marry freemen. To have subjects, to keep them firmly under his control, to augment as much as possible the revenue of his own private government, such was henceforth his sole ambition.

Any considerations of equity, of social amelioration, or universal morality, the dissemination of knowledge, and intellectual emancipation, affected him but little. They merely served to sadden him, for he considered that, if these nonsensical notions won favour with the public, they would be a very bad omen as regards the prosperity of his offspring, whom he believed he had created in his own image and likeness.

He subscribed to several newspapers, reviews, and illustrated publications, simply because these sheets were all to be met with in the reception-rooms of his neighbours; but he never endeavoured to discover by perusing them what were the needs, the general feeling, the current of ideas, and the aspirations of the new era now dawning. Of the ordinary contents of the *Journal des Débats*, for instance, he never allowed any mention in his presence, save that it were what came under the heading *Assize Court;* and then all at once he would exclaim, "What is the use of tribunals which are open to the public? Why confer this name of 'public' on the populace? And what is the use of publishing all these horrors, which one hears in the court-room, over and over again in the newspapers?" And more frequently still he was accustomed to say, "You see, you see what abominations daily take place in the West! And yet there are fools who want to Europeanise Russia, when, on the contrary, it is for Europe to Russianise herself, as she ought to do for her own safety; otherwise I predict that she will shortly perish in final impenitence."

The most important duty which he fulfilled with regard to his six eldest sons, was to accompany them in succession to Petersburg and Moscow in order to install them respectively in the public service—the army, the navy, the departments of finances, justice, foreign and home affairs. The other lads, who were younger, were placed in various educational institutions.

That done, he received and opened their letters, glanced over them, beginning at the end, and then threw them on the table, and left the task of answering them to his wife. He took some pleasure in seeing his sons again when they came home on leave, and he sent them back at the expiration of their furloughs much better provided with money than with sentimental blessings. They, on their part, returned without regret, the one to the general whose aide-de-camp he was, the second to his ship, the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth to their offices, and the others to their schools. As for his daughters, he did not understand how they could want anything but ribbons and dancing-lessons in the first place, or dowries and *trousseaux* in the next.

The district was unfortunate in its marshals; in less than two years it lost three of them. Melekitchentzoff died of indigestion; Count Nulin, who followed him, of a fall from his horse; and Kostlyakin, the third one, of the measles, though some people said that it was the cholera. At all events, Tchitchikoff was destined to arrive at the goal of his desires. He was called upon to discharge the functions of the marshalate, pending the next elections, and was regarded as a worthy representative of the local nobility, except by certain country squires, who were impatient of all superiority, and who, like Prince Tchigirin, their leader, had never been known to be satisfied with anyone.

An interim appointment was all that our hero wanted; some months later, he was confirmed in his post for three years, and he resigned himself to his duties. We will not designate those who were the most assiduous at his table and his entertainments —they can be divined. The malcontents? Of course, with Tchigirin always at their head.

The millionaire Melekitchentzoff, in dying, had appointed Tchitchikoff to be one of his executors and co-guardian of his two minor sons. All this weighed heavily in his favour, and was of great advantage to him, thanks to the manner in which he discharged his duties. There was very little of the *citizen* about him, and, on the other hand, much of the self-made grand seigneur —the provincial grand seigneur of the antique pattern.

Thus, despite success, our hero, having a heart far above his fortunes, was not in the least satisfied. With his hair of alabaster whiteness, his calm and upright bearing, his florid cheeks, his aristocratically fine and transparent nose, his magnetic glance, the noble and generous manner in which he did the honours of his house, his gala-days, and his great festivals, he thought that the nobility of the country did not render him justice in proportion to his merits; and indeed he was of opinion that, at the elections which took place eleven months after his exaltation, he ought to have been elected marshal of the province, instead of being confirmed as marshal of his district for the succeeding three years. This well-deserved promotion would have had the effect, not only of taking him in triumph to the capital of the

province, but would have opened to him the doors of the palace of the Czars at Petersburg, and possibly have attached to his marshal's uniform the golden key of court chamberlain, which renders the offices of master and grand master of ceremonies accessible.

However, Tchitchikoff kept his thoughts to himself, and, too proud to sulk like a fool, he retreated into himself like a sage. But his eyes constantly turned to the walls, the floors, and the ceilings of the principal rooms of his house, and he thought them all very bare, very mean, and very poor, compared to the marvels which he had seen in the Kremlin at Moscow, and in the great Winter Palace of the new capital.

As he had so many great qualities, our hero will surely pardon us for not concealing anything. He had a lofty soul, and a quick, just, and penetrating mind; but his heart, which was often so strong, was not exempt from momentary weaknesses. He feared all contact with foreigners, on account, in the first place, of their habit of immediately judging a country which baffles their research; in the second place of their detestable love of novelties, styled progress; and in the third place, of their stupid principles in favour of the equality of all citizens before the law.

The very word citizen, as applied to plebeians, to peasants, and even to the merchant and artisan classes, seemed to him a revolting absurdity. The law, in his opinion, was a machine set up and worked by noblemen, and which performed its functions for the benefit of noblemen, who had at their head the Czar, who, to his honour be it said, was the first gentleman in the empire; equality was to his mind only an antique phantom evoked by the evil-intentioned from the depths of the ruins of the fabulous republics of Pskoff and Novgorod, at the instigation of the philosophers of Germany, who had already suffocated Poland with the fumes of their political wisdom.

Thus Tchitchikoff entertained sentiments with regard to the inhabitants of Europe which were thoroughly Chinese. He conscientiously failed to fulfil any engagements with Englishmen, Frenchmen, Germans, Swiss, and Italians, simply with the object of making them feel that a formal treaty or engagement entered into with them was not a contract which could bind the Russian. If he yielded in the end, it was only at the entreaty of his peers in the nobility; and he still acquitted himself after his own fashion, obliging them to feel that he acted out of respect to himself, and not in virtue of any alleged contract, which was and could be only a fiction.

Although he sought out their Parisian soap, their *eau-de-Cologne*, their Holland cambric, their Sheffield knives and razors, their Périgord truffles, their Strasburg *pâtés*, their Champagne wines, their Sedan cloths, and their Aubusson carpets, he much preferred to obtain these things from Polish Jews rather than direct from Frenchmen, Englishmen, Italians, and Germans. He would willingly have employed the Jews of White Russia

to teach his daughters the languages and literatures of the four nations. He would have liked an Italian opera company, entirely composed of singers from the Ukraïna; a French theatre, with actors born at Simbirsk and Tobolsk; and a German theatre, where the performers would have been Kalmuks and Kirghiz-Kazáks.

One of the most characteristic traits of our hero's lofty personality was patriotism, the most exclusive Great Russian patriotism. He was perfectly willing to admit imitation that was the simple mark of the universal adaptability of the Muscovite nature; he did not admit the infusion of foreign genius; he repulsed every shadow of any association or affiliation whatever. The introduction of a Frenchman, an Englishman, a Swiss, or a Belgian into the councils of the government would, in his eyes, have been as great an enormity as a request to a fox, a wolf, a hyena, or a shark to take care of an aviary, a sheepfold, a menagerie, or a great national lake, like those of Ladoga, Onega, and Ilmen. A Jew, however, might be allowed to assume office, for if he did not walk straight, one would have no hesitation in despatching him, without any noise, to those vast eastern provinces of the empire where the need of men to work the mines concealed in the great chain of mountains bordering upon the Chinese frontier was making itself more and more felt, and where the Western nations had absolutely no reason to interfere.

Politics, diplomacy, home rule, justice, men, things, defects, prejudices, abuses—numerous, varied, and universal—he accepted, protected, adored them all, such as they existed in Russia. He delighted in everything that was Russian, because it was Russian, because it existed for the benefit of the nobility of his country; because, in spite of all restraints, the "cute" Russian, by properly guiding the bark of his cupidity, could, even without any special talent, without the least genius, without having rendered any distinguished services, attain to nobility, fortune, honours, and even dream of the highest dignities. And he delighted in the vices, wrongs, crimes, anomalies, and frequent contradictions of a system which led everyone to believe in evil and no one in the law, simply because, in his eyes, all these defects had their good sides for the ambitious. Moreover, he did not see that there was any inconvenience to the country in the fact that thirty millions of serfs and low-class families remained in bondage, called upon to provide for the questionable pleasures, to the life of barbarous luxury, and the often savage fancies of three hundred thousand satraps, upheld by a million of corrupt country squires, and flanked by three or four thousand Jewish, Greek, and Mongolian nabobs.

Tchitchikoff, during the happy days of his journeyings, had dreamed of a fortune, of a pretty wife, an elegant retreat, a sumptuous equipage, a numerous progeny; of clearing new land, of cleverly managing far-stretching forests, of agricultural prosperity, and of the happiness of his vassals. Everything, except

the happiness of his vassals—except this last point, which had, in fact, merely been included in his programme like the set dishes which always remain intact in the refreshment-rooms on great railway lines—everything had prospered with him according to his wishes, and had even much surpassed his expectations. But if he had been asked how far his wife and his six eldest sons shared the habitual order of his thoughts in his old age, he would have been greatly embarrassed to give any reply; for, if he had moments of effusion with the nobility who were invited to his feasts and festivals, he never indulged in any in the bosom of his happy family. "My family," he might have answered, "*must* love and honour me, because I am its head, just as I love my country, just as I love and honour the Czar, because he is my chief and my master. Neither the emperor nor I demand an account of our mutual opinions or our mutual affections. We do not even know each other. It is the same with my sons and me; they have the honour of being my sons. I do not allow them to want for anything, as is my duty as a father and a gentleman. What necessity is there, after that, of our knowing each other?"

A heavy wager might be laid to-day that Tchitchikoff no longer belongs to this lower world. Probably he is dead. But who knows? Who can tell what became of Ninus, Romulus, Belisarius, the mother of the Pious Æneas, and Andrei Kurbsky, Prince of Yaroslav, of the blood of Rurik?

Nevertheless, our duty as an impartial historian requires that we should report what has come down to us in relation to this sad subject; without, however, guaranteeing anything, and without attaching more importance than is necessary to the conjectures of an idolatrous public. However, many people maintain that our hero is still living, and that, octogenarian and decrepit though this noble personification of ancient Russia may be, he appears to enjoy marvellously good health for his age. Folks whisper in covert words into the ears which care to listen that Tchitchikoff is in his province the secret chief, the real soul of that venerable faction which is called the party of the Immovables: men who gravely protest against changing the old system of a government, which may have its faults,* but which has in its favour the sanction of time. They argue that it should not be demolished under the pretext of making reparation to a class which has been held for centuries under a ban, and under the pretext of effecting eclectic progress in humanitarian, social, and Christian civilisation. According to this party, people must neither imitate nor tolerate any of those accursed revolutions which do violence to the past, upset the future, and deliver it over to adventurers. Tchitchikoff has never proffered one word

* It should be borne in mind that all this was written prior to the freeing of the serfs, though of course many of the remarks have a bearing even upon present times.

of recrimination against any man, or any part of the legal or extra-legal system established in the country. That must be said for him in justice; in that respect he has held his place as a son, a nephew, a scholar, a parishioner, a scribe, an employé, a clerk, a custom-house official, and a partner with the sons of Israel; also as a gentleman's steward, as a gentleman traveller, as a speculator, as a prisoner, as a lover—if he ever was one, even in imagination—as a man prosecuted and condemned, as a land and serf-owner, as an elector of magistrates, and as a candidate, who, after being scoffed at, was finally elected from necessity.

The revenue service, the finances, the church, the organisation of the army, the navy, the courts of justice, and the prisons; the salaries of the functionaries and clerks, the educational system, the police, the serfdom of the masses, the general simony—these he has never protested against; he has accepted them all, approved of them all, by his silence and his submission. And yet, as the reader has seen, our hero suffered horribly until his marriage. But this did not prevent him becoming the possessor of a considerable fortune, an orderly man, a marshal of the nobility of his district, and of enjoying in his green old age general esteem and respect.

To our mind, the whole secret of his special policy (which in the eyes of many persons will possess the merit of being eminently practical) consisted in turning obstacles, and in making use at all times and in every situation, of evil to further his especial benefit.

Alas! generations follow each other like days; and, like days, they do not resemble each other. All Tchitchikoff's youthful family is now notoriously in favour of liberal and sweeping reforms. And their mother, in the privacy of the family, willingly recognises, in company with her children, this simple moral truth, that monstrous abuses do not gain in respectability simply because they are old and remarkably tenacious of life. For ourselves, we will not permit our admiration for the exploits of the father to blind us to the very different merits of the sons, who vie with each other in contending and proclaiming that for the general good all private interests should hold their peace, and that the happiness of a great people can only be the outcome of sacrifice in high spheres.

The Russian is not only Catholic and Christian at bottom, but he also possesses all the instincts of the genius of initiation. What likelihood, then, is there that he will much longer put up with a semi-pagan system of government, which is the sole cause of his physical and moral discomfort, and which impedes the fruitful march of the nation in its career of progress?

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